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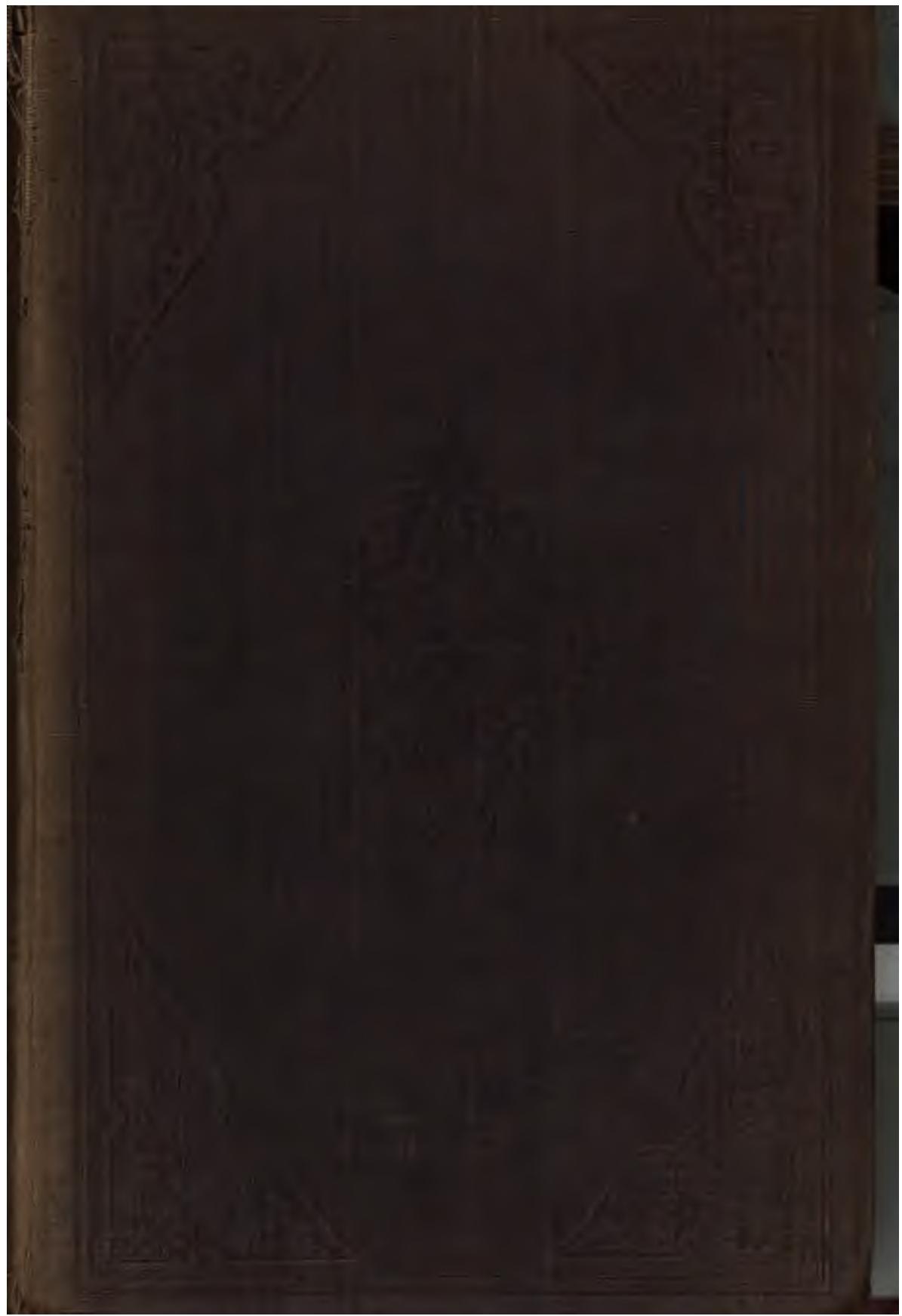
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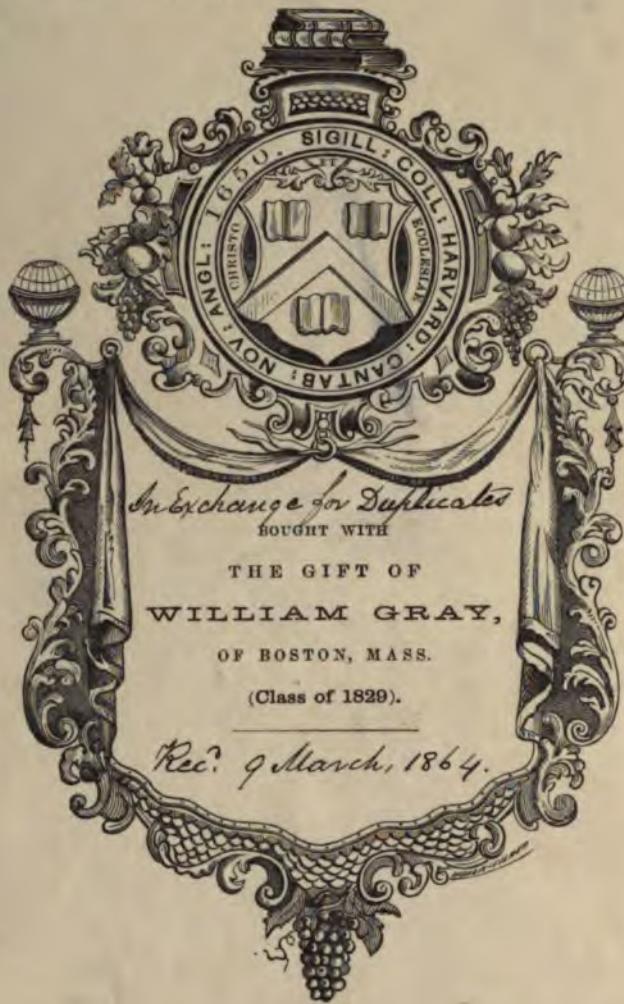
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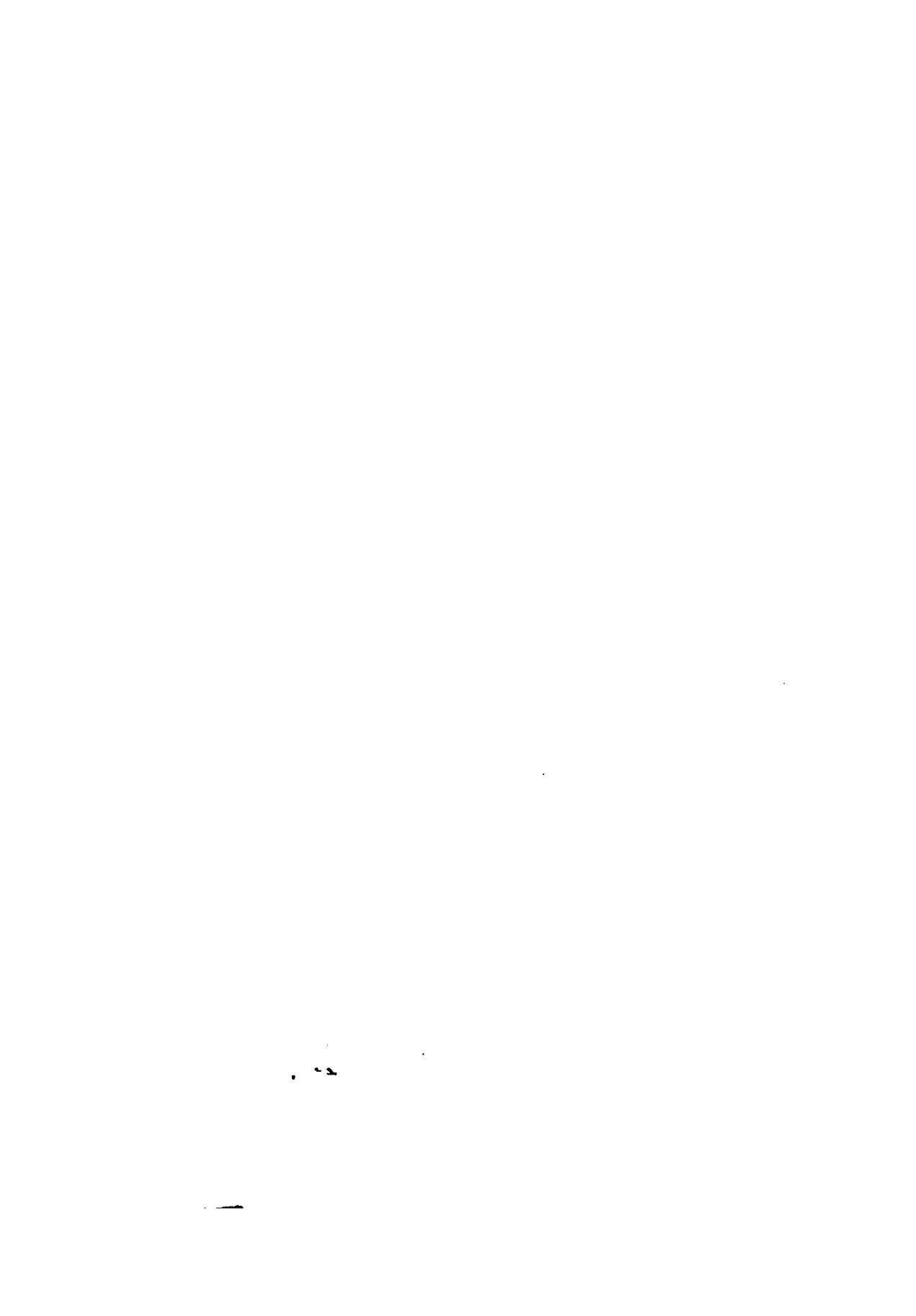
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STATE CHURCHES

AND THE

KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

AN ESSAY

ON

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MINISTERS, FORMS AND SERVICES
OF RELIGION BY SECULAR POWER;

AND ON

ITS INCONSISTENCY WITH THE FREE, HUMBLING, SPIRITUAL
NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.

BY JOHN ALLEN.

"Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world."—JOHN xviii. 36.

"Behold the kingdom of God is within you."—LUKE xvii. 21.

"The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."—ROM. xiv. 17.

"Brethren, we are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free. Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."—GAL iv. 31; v. 1.

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P R E F A C E.

HAVING long been painfully impressed with the evils of compulsory ecclesiastical systems, existing in Britain and in other nations, I have thought it to be a duty to my own country in particular, to point out those evils, and faithfully to plead for such a thorough change in this respect, as is required by the great principles of the New Testament, and adapted to promote the highest interests of man. Far from being disposed to write in a strain of bitterness, I have endeavoured to handle the subject dispassionately and impartially, under the conviction that every Christian community is entitled to be treated with deference and respect. The present complaint is not against Protestant Episcopacy, or any other religious profession, as such ; but applies to all systems for establishing and upholding any religious tenets by the power of the state. It is the principle of this union and enforcement,—the interference of the civil authority in religious matters, and the intrusion of ecclesiastical authority into secular matters, with whatever doctrines connected, that will be mainly considered in the following pages. I rejoice in believing that many of the ministers and private individuals of the Established Church of England, to which principally reference is made, are members of the true universal church of Christ, and children of God by adoption. And I gladly bear testimony to the moderation, with which the power and privileges entrusted to that church are in the present day

generally exercised, notwithstanding instances to the contrary ; but I fully believe that its true spiritual interests and those of the nation at large would be greatly promoted, by a severance of its union with the state.

The origin and growth of the compulsory emoluments by which ecclesiastical establishments are usually supported, and of some of those many ceremonial observances which the power of the state has been employed to enforce, have of necessity come under review ; these points being intimately connected with the alliance between civil and religious authority, and clearly showing the injurious character of the system, both in the means of its maintenance and in the mode of its operation.

The great question of religious establishments is too commonly regarded as chiefly of a pecuniary and political nature. Considering such a view of it to be inadequate and far too narrow, I can only say that if, in my apprehension, it had not a much wider range, and a very influential bearing on the eternal interests of man, the present appeal would not have been made.

No one, who has studied the numerous evidences of public opinion, can suppose that the views here taken are new or uncommon ; on the contrary, among the middle classes of society they are general and rapidly progressive ; yet so closely connected with the system under notice are men of almost all shades of party in the upper ranks, that it will probably be upheld by them as long as possible, at least for the sake of family or individual interest, and doubtless in many cases with higher and purer motives.

Without attempting to draw any odious comparison, it may be asserted that the British and other European nations have so long been accustomed to the dominant yoke of ecclesiastical authority, and the United States of America to the inhuman yoke of the slave-master, that however each nation may disdain that sort of thraldom which does not prevail within its own

limits, not one of them either properly estimates the unjust and untenable character of its own system, or sees in their true and full dimensions the degrading effects of the yoke which it tolerates and upholds. The true welfare of each of these powerful nations cannot fail to be injuriously affected by the long sufferance of such violations of equity. May the day speedily arrive, when they shall look impartially on these respective systems in the true light of the gospel, and resolutely apply such effectual remedies, as the great principles of our holy religion clearly prescribe and afford !

Whatever may be the defects of the following pages—and many they are acknowledged to be—I trust the reader will find nothing in them at variance with the first Christian duty of charity towards the members of any religious denomination ; my sincere desire having been, while advocating faithfully and without compromise the principles of scriptural truth, ever to be found speaking that “truth in love.”¹ Although on parts of this Essay, I have been favoured with the sentiments of some of my friends, yet it must be fully understood that I am alone responsible for the general contents. I do not lay claim to much learning or deep research, to which a life of active occupation is but ill adapted ; but I have diligently endeavoured, as far as a small share of ability and leisure has permitted, to make a candid use of the materials which lay within reach ; and the labour has been lightened by a sincere desire to serve, according to my views, the cause of truth and righteousness.

Ecclesiastical history abounds with interesting details, on most of the points briefly adverted to in these pages—and to those details I would earnestly recommend the reader—but the object here has been to select a few leading features, and to set them forth in a small compass. Had not prejudice and self-interest operated with a large proportion of church historians,

¹ Eph. iv. 15.

the opposition of an almost continuous series of enlightened reformers to corruption and superstition would doubtless have been much more clearly apparent than is now the case.

In this age, when unsound principles pertinaciously acted on, and grievances long unredressed, have but recently given birth to wide-spread revolutions, overturning ancient political edifices and uprooting the foundations of society in many countries, it is especially necessary, by way of guarding against danger and strengthening just institutions, to remove obvious evils as soon as possible. But indeed purer motives ought to prompt a course of sound constitutional reformation, on questions of vital importance to the highest interests of all our fellow-subjects, and especially of the English Episcopal Church herself, and to effect the dissolution of those degrading fetters, which bind her in unholy connection with political authority.

Firm is my opinion, that the union argued against is the grand defect of the British constitution, that the growing light of the age will assuredly prove, under the Divine Blessing, too strong for its retention, and that it must and will be done away. May those in power deliberate and act wisely, ere it be too late ; and thus be the honourable instruments of good to our beloved country, averting those rash measures, which operate not peaceably and lawfully, but with tumult and widely diffused distress, inflicting incalculable injury of various kinds on the nations which resort to them. Christian meekness and moral firmness combined are essential to the right conduct of every real religious reformation.

Some may possibly think that, on a question so closely connected with national policy, too frequent reference is made in these pages to religious considerations and to spiritual and scriptural views. But on the other hand, let it be remembered that religion is not a mere theoretical system, but an eminently practical principle, which ought to operate with benign effects

on all our institutions. As a matter of moral duty having reference to the highest interests of man, far more than as one of state policy, I wish respectfully to commend the subject to the earnest and serious reflection of my countrymen.

One object has been, by presenting the reader with many gleanings from ecclesiastical history under separate heads, to develope the rise of several religious opinions and observances upheld by state authority, in order to throw light on their actual features and character. For minute investigations into their inconsistency with the tenor of the New Testament, reference may be had to other works, treating on them at length.

Some of the following pages will be found to contain a concise compilation of the declarations of various other Christians, and especially of those faithful reformers, who yielded up life itself in support of their conscientious convictions ; and whose clear but neglected testimonies are adduced, in confirmation of what I believe to be evangelical truth.

Without entering much into the writings of other recent authors, I have endeavoured plainly to set forth my own views ; with the desire that this imperfect outline of the infraction of great gospel principles may obtain a deliberate and candid consideration, and that the evils pointed out may be calmly but faithfully grappled with, in a manner befitting an enlightened Christian country.

All who mark the gross corruptions, which pervaded the professing Christian Church so extensively in the dark ages, must feel deeply thankful for the greater degree of light and holiness prevailing in the present day, and some may even be ready to think that it is needless to recall so particularly errors that have to a large extent been renounced. Yet it is necessary to bear in mind, that the corruptions of that period are but partially removed, that while the blacker shades have been obliterated, the evil principle still prevails in many

countries, and that the reformation from the pollutions of the apostacy has scarcely reached, even now, some of the dark places of the earth ; while even in our own favoured land both superstition and infidelity show themselves to be still alive, and stalk boldly forth. Hence is required a frequent and anxious recurrence to the pure principles of the religion of Christ.

It is very possible that, in treating on so great a variety of topics, some sentiments may be found to be inadvertently expressed in terms that are equivocal, or open to objections which I have not perceived. Should such be the case, I must request from the reader a favourable construction, and the candid interpretation of one part by the general bearing of the whole.

Liskeard, Fifth Month 1st, 1853.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE union of “Church and State” is carried out in various modes.

1st. In the support of one particular church or religious denomination, by the power and wealth of the state ; involving the exclusion from it of all the other churches in a country, and the compulsion of their members to support the favoured one ; the rulers of the state being, by virtue of authority, the rulers of that particular church, appointing its officers, and prescribing its discipline and services. Such is the case of the British Episcopal Protestant Church, in England and Wales.

2nd. If the view be extended to the whole of Great Britain, another case presents itself : viz., the support of two established churches by the British Government—one in one district ; and the second, widely differing from it, in the other district,—an Episcopal Church in England and Wales, and a Presbyterian Church in Scotland. While the favours of the state are bestowed on each within its own limits, to these limits they are strictly confined ; the same profession which is established and prescribed as the orthodox national church in England and Wales, with compulsory powers conferred by the state, being excluded from State favour, and adjudged to be dissent or schism in Scotland, and *vice versa*.

3rd. The rulers of a state supporting, by its wealth and power, the officers and services of several or all of the particular churches within its territory ; and, in consideration of this sup-

port, exercising a degree of control over their officers, doctrine, and discipline. Such is the condition of things in France, adopted on the principle of impartiality, instead of an entire withdrawal of state support from all.

4th. On the other hand, the rulers of one particular church or denomination obtaining the secular authority of a state, and applying its power and wealth to the support of their own ecclesiastical officers, services and objects ; all other churches being prosecuted, or excluded from its favour. Such is the case with the Roman States in Italy.

In each of these instances, there is a state-enacted union of civil and ecclesiastical authority in the same hands, the possession of the one conferring the other. The object of this treatise is, to show the evils of the union, which grew up in the dark ages, in whatever mode it may now exist ; to set forth how it has operated in time past, and how it still operates ; to advocate its total abolition ; and to maintain that it is no part of the business of civil government to interfere, as such, in ecclesiastical or religious matters, nor of the rulers of a church to interfere, as such, in secular matters. Thus no particular church would be specially favoured, nor other churches oppressed by the state ; but the members of all would stand on equal terms, according to their several merits and capabilities, and the cause of true religion be greatly promoted.

For want of sufficiently recognising and keeping in view the existence of various Christian churches, mention has often been vaguely made of “ the Church ” in a general sense ; as though it were one great visible community, embracing all true Christians within the limits of a state, contrary to actual circumstances in every country ; and hence have arisen unreasonable ideas and false conclusions.

STATE CHURCHES

AND THE

KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

WHEN the Christian dispensation was about to be introduced into the world, its near approach was proclaimed by John the Baptist, the immediate forerunner of Christ, in these words, “The kingdom of heaven,” or, “the kingdom of God is at hand.”¹ And our Saviour himself used the same language, at the early periods of his personal ministry. It appears, therefore, that one great object of his condescending to take human nature upon him, was to establish his own kingdom — the kingdom of God, or of heaven—among mankind.

This great event had long been expected by the Jews. Their prophets had predicted it from one generation to another: its glory, and privileges, and permanence had been often pointed out; but the mode of accomplishment was not clearly defined nor understood. When Christ spoke to his disciples of his approaching sufferings and death, even one of themselves replied, under the expectation of an outward kingdom, “Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee.”² And after his crucifixion, being ignorant of the nature of his intentions, they anxiously inquired of him, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”³ As the king of the Jews, he was arraigned before

¹ Matt. iii. 2; Mark i. 15.

² Matt. xvi. 22.

³ Acts i. 6.

Pilate ; and when this governor demanded of him the truth of the charge, he answered, " My kingdom is not of this world : if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews ; but now is my kingdom not from hence ;" and he added, " Thou sayest (truly) that I am a king ; to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth ; every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."¹

These declarations of Jesus Christ evidently show that, though he came to set up a kingdom on earth, yet it was to be of a nature and in a manner totally different from those of the kingdoms of this world. His precepts and his example prove that love to God and love to man were the first laws of his dominion, that it was not to be upheld by violence or deceit, but that his subjects were to be those who listened and were obedient to the truth. The prophet Daniel foretold it in these remarkable terms :—" Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands ; and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold : in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed ; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, for it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."²

Christ declared, " The kingdom of God cometh not with observation ; neither shall they say, lo here, or, lo there ; for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."³ His Holy Spirit which bears rule there, is not of an outward or tangible nature, but influences and governs the minds, consciences, and souls of men. " And when Jesus perceived that they would come, and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed into a mountain alone."⁴ From these and many other like passages, we may conclude that the kingdom of Christ was not to be of a worldly kind, imposing in its appearance, or established by human contrivance or power. The stone was to be cut out of the mountain without hands ; small at first, yet gradually to increase to a great mountain and fill the whole earth. Under another figure of the same import, the kingdom of heaven is described as a " grain of mustard seed, the least of all seeds ;" but growing up to a large tree, till the fowls of the air could

¹ John xviii. 36, 37.

² Dan. ii. 45.

³ Luke xvii. 20.

⁴ John vi. 15.

lodge in the branches.¹ This is true, as well in a general, as in an individual sense.

As Christ's kingdom was not to be set up, so neither was it afterwards to be sustained, by force or fraud; human wisdom and greatness, as such, were not to be its pillars, but lowliness and meekness; for he declared, " Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven; "² implying that they could not otherwise be his faithful subjects. When the Samaritans would not receive him, and some of his disciples inquired whether they should call for fire from heaven to destroy these unbelievers, he meekly replied, " Ye know not what spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man is come, not to destroy men's lives, but to save them."³ Thus he testified that they were not subject to the influence of his meek, holy, and beneficent sovereignty, but ignorant what its nature was, and whose subjects they really were; for that he came to promote love and truth, to save and not to destroy, even them who opposed him. It may be asserted that the whole tenor of the New Testament is consonant with this view of the character of the kingdom of Christ; and that, in proportion to the purity and faithfulness with which it is upheld, will love, sincerity, and meekness, " peace on earth, good will to men, and glory to God,"⁴ prevail as its sure tokens and genuine results. Nothing else can equally promote even the temporal happiness of mankind. Well, therefore, may Christians pray: " Thy kingdom come—thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."⁵

It would not be consistent with the purpose of this essay, to enter at length on the nature of Christ's kingdom on earth. Most readers, it is hoped, have glimpses, more or less correct and enlarged, of its holy, spiritual character. The writer however may venture, simply and briefly, to give his own view of it, drawn from the consideration of holy scripture.

The glorified Head of the universal church, the Redeemer and Saviour of men, who dwelt for a time on earth, and offered himself on the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, descends to visit the naturally dark hearts of all men by the influences of his holy Grace, Light, or Spirit, in greater or less degrees, reproving them for evil, inciting them to good, enlight-

¹ Matt. xiii. 31, 32.

² Matt. xviii. 3.

³ Luke ix. 56.

⁴ Luke ii. 14.

⁵ Matt. vi. 10.

ening the conscience, and, as yielded to, subduing and purifying the will and affections, producing the work of regeneration, calling them to become his subjects, qualifying them for service in his church, and preparing them for heaven : all this being effected, in proportion as man, whatever may be the variety of his external circumstances, submits to this holy influence ; some, unhappily, rebelling against it, whereby they become less susceptible of its visitations, and all liable to fall away, through unwatchfulness and disobedience.

We are assured that “the kingdom of God is within,”¹ or of a spiritual character ; also that “it is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,”²—essentially holy and peaceful in its character. If we would know its establishment, and be sharers in its heavenly benefits, it must be set up in our hearts and rule there, diffusing these benign principles over our inmost thoughts, motives, and affections, as well as over our words and actions. If we are ruled by the Spirit of Christ, we shall bring forth its fruits—humility, purity, justice, meekness, long-suffering, peace, temperance, faith, hope, and charity. These will mark our conduct, as that of the subjects of Christ’s kingdom ; and according as we are defective in any of the Christian virtues, so are we rebelling against him, however we may persuade ourselves or others to the contrary.

¹ Luke xvii. 21.

² Rom. xiv. 17.

CHAPTER II.

THE SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE WHICH RULES IN CHRIST'S KINGDOM, AND THE SECULAR POWER WHICH GOVERNS THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD—THE ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE AND DISTINCTION BETWEEN THEM.

THE declaration of the Saviour of men that his “kingdom is not of this ‘world,’”¹ is fraught with deeply important truths. It strikes at the root of all attempts to endow and support spiritual authority with secular power, and to enforce a union between them. Indeed, holy scripture and experience teach us, that these two principles and sources of influence are entirely different, and independent of each other—rarely found in large measure in the same individual or church—but often like the scales of the balance, the one depressed in proportion as the other is lifted up. Vain, therefore, are the attempts forcibly and permanently to combine elements so dissimilar, and often so opposite.

Under the theocracy of the ancient Israelites, the political system was eminently a religious system, and based upon the latter as such. All the rites and observances, the worship and the sacrifices, the officiating tribe of the Levites, and the chosen family of the priesthood, the mode of their support, and the extent of their duties, were minutely prescribed in the law given by Moses. There was but one true visible church, or mode of religion in the state, and there could be but one. Yet when the kingly power was established, the monarchs were often rebuked by the prophets of the Lord. Far from being the heads of the church, the kings were sometimes “rejected”² and denounced by its voice, leaguing themselves with idols and the enemies of the living God.

The old pagan system of religion was mainly an engine of state; its regulations and services were therefore committed

¹ John xviii. 36.

² 1 Sam. xvi. 1 ; 2 Kings i. 3.

to the control and exercise of the civil authorities. The chief magistrate of the ancient Romans had always been entrusted with the superintendence of the national religion, and might properly perform its most sacred functions.

The Christian religion was based on a totally different principle. Lowly in the estimate of man, Christianity arose from a Divine original, containing a spiritual power above all human authority, and unconnected with it. A degree of this power was committed by its Divine Author to his faithful followers, of whatever worldly rank or station. Hence, the duties of the prince and of the minister of the gospel—of the rulers of the state and the rulers of the church, became wholly distinct and independent. The minister and every advanced Christian might be either a prince or a peasant, but must possess spiritual authority. The prince and magistrate, whether religious or irreligious, must possess human authority. The necessary connexion between worldly greatness and religious eminence was for ever dissolved.

Civil government, employing secular measures, is ordained from on high to be wisely administered for civil purposes—to establish and maintain order, justice, and equity—to protect the weak and the poor—to repress violence and oppression—to punish the wicked—to encourage industry and art—to promote knowledge and civilization—to reward and stimulate virtue—to aid the moral elevation and happiness of man. It regards and treats him as a citizen, a member of the social community, bound by implied civil contract to act in union with those around him, for mutual benefit. It takes cognizance of his words and actions, as they relate to others and to the commonwealth. It endeavours to secure for him temporal comforts, acts upon him by external considerations and motives, expecting from him submission to the laws, and a proper quota of personal services, mental exertions, or pecuniary contributions for the good of the state. If he offend against its regulations, he is liable to be punished, either in his person or in his effects, by the authority of the magistrate, for the warning of himself and others, as well as for the protection of the public. Such is the province of civil government—its objects are of a temporal and moral nature—affecting man as a responsible being, endowed with faculties of mind and body; and in its due administra-

tion, it is entitled to respect, submission, and co-operation. Moreover, those in authority must act on the broad basis of Christian principle, and a comprehensive liberality, with respect both to their co-religionists and to dissidents, to their own subjects and to foreigners, as well as to the various classes of society; not indulging sectarian views, merely selfish motives, or narrow retaliatory conduct, but aiming, at every point, to carry the spirit and temper of the New Testament into enlarged and consistent practice. They must imitate the example of that glorious Being—that universal Governor—who “maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”¹

In relation to the kingdom of Christ, man is to be viewed as a spiritual agent, a fallen but immortal being, placed for a time in this world as in a scene of probation, that through faith and righteousness while here, he may, by the aid of divine grace, be prepared for a glorious and an eternal state of existence hereafter. He must be regarded as subject to the authority and government of Christ, his paramount Lord, deriving all good from him, who is ready, by his Holy Spirit, to enlighten, reprove, animate, and direct him—showing him his duty, and requiring his obedience—pointing out from time to time the evil to be forsaken and the good to be embraced, and who will judge him accordingly at the last day. The instructions being spiritual,—whether by the immediate perceptible influences of the Spirit of Truth, or through the medium of the Holy Scriptures, the preaching of the gospel, or the course of Divine Providence—the considerations and motives are spiritual also: having reference chiefly to spiritual obedience and disobedience, to heavenly rewards and punishments. At the same time, it must be thankfully acknowledged, as an additional incentive, that “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”²

It is not as a mere moral subject of human government, that every one of us has to consider his position, privileges, and responsibilities; but as a subject of a higher and infinite authority, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, of Him whose kingdom is within us, who looks at the heart with an omniscient eye, and expects its allegiance through the power which he

¹ Matt. v. 45.

² 1 Tim. iv. 8.

graciously dispenses. While each renders unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, he must also render unto God the things which are God's. One man or people may be situated here on earth under an arbitrary government, and another individual or nation may be in the full enjoyment of liberty; yet their difference in this respect is of little comparative importance. If they are true Christians, or subjects of the spiritual kingdom of Christ, they will endeavour to look beyond and above the present limited sphere to the heavenly Sovereign—to ascertain his will as their first law—and to obey his commands as their chief pleasure. This continued endeavour, accompanied by a lowly sense of their imperfect obedience, and by a trustful reliance on Him who is their only strength and atonement, will render them all, under their different circumstances, good subjects of their respective governments, conscientiously striving to fill up with faithfulness their respective places in human society. Earthly governments may be dissolved, powerful empires may change, and ancient dynasties may pass away; yet they know that He, to whom they owe the highest allegiance, is immutable and eternal; that He ruleth as their King above all; and that, as they are faithful to Him, he will be their protector for ever.

Great is the privilege to be subjects of a well-ordered earthly kingdom, to partake of its benefits, and to enjoy its peace; but incomparably greater is the privilege to any, in whatever outward position, humbly to believe that they are, through divine grace, subjects of Christ's spiritual kingdom, desiring above all other things to act in obedience to his laws, and to share his protection and favour. The world, even professors of religion, may frown upon such and despise them; it may deny them the title of Christians, and render their endeavours to yield allegiance to Christ a cause of persecution and temporal distress; but if he speak pardon and peace to their souls, if they are permitted to feel the sustaining power of the love of God, bearing witness with their spirits that they are his subjects,¹ they will be enabled to rejoice in the conviction, that, all unworthy as they are, Christ is truly their Peace-maker and King, and that of his kingdom and peace there shall be no end.

Even if his heart is not right in the sight of God, man may possibly be an irreproachable subject of human government;

¹ Rom. viii. 16.

but if he is a faithful subject of Christ, he will not fail to be a good citizen, an exemplary member of the secular community. Civil government regards him in his social external relations; the government of Christ in his individual spiritual condition. If civil government attempt to consider, to influence, and to regulate the latter, it takes upon itself a charge for which it was not intended, and to which it is unequal; it exceeds its province, and sooner or later injures what it professes to aid.

The distinction between the two principles is necessary to be ever kept in view. Man is the head of human government, and is frail and fallible. Christ is the head in his spiritual kingdom or church, and is all-powerful and all-wise. The laws of the one are external; those of the other, enforced as they are by holy scripture and the preaching of the gospel, are written on the heart, apprehended, and applied through the Holy Spirit. The laws of the one are to be established and maintained by human authority and outward means; those of the other by divine, inward, gentle, and self-persuasive power and convictions. In the latter, the interference of human authority tends to mar the work, and to destroy the spiritual vitality.

Christ particularly pointed out this distinction, and cautioned his followers against overlooking it, and acting on the spirit and principles of the world. "Ye know that the princes of the gentiles exercise dominion over them; and they that are great exercise authority upon them: but it shall not be so among you, but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."¹ Consequently the greatness and power of this world have no place, as such, in the kingdom or church of Christ; on the contrary, they are often disqualifying circumstances and appendages, to be regarded rather with jealousy, as snares and temptations, than as helps in the kingdom of Christ, and in the government of his church.

We may speak with confidence of secular power, because we understand its nature and workings; but it becomes us to speak with diffidence and fear when we treat, with reference to experience, of the character of the kingdom of Christ; the influence of which is sacred, and not appreciated or understood, but by such as feel its authority and submit to its government. While

¹ Matt. xx. 25, 26.

man professes to be under its rule, and even persuades himself that he is so ; too often, alas ! through the remaining corruption of the natural heart, he is induced to reject the converting power of divine grace, not knowing what spirit he is of ; till, if he pursue this course, he will at last be only awakened from his delusion by the heart-piercing words, “ I know you not, depart from me all ye that work iniquity.”¹ May we not say, that so pure, so gentle, is the influence of the Spirit of Christ ; so apt to be grieved by our disobedience, to be quenched by our sinfulness, that though we may begin well, and even run well for a season, yet, without continual watchfulness unto prayer, we are ever in danger of departing from it, losing its life and virtue, yielding to worldly inferior influences, and embracing, instead of the living reality, an empty shadow.

Perhaps there is no cause more fertile in producing this injurious effect on individuals, or on professing churches, than the temptations presented by the possession of worldly power and riches, especially when these are held out as rewards for the performance of sacred functions and religious duties.

“ When the church is dressed up in gaudy fortunes,” remarked Bishop Taylor, who had known something of human vicissitudes, “ it is no more than she deserves ; yet sometimes it occasions that the devil cheats her of her holiness, and men of the world sacrilegiously cheat her of her riches. And when God hath reduced her to that poverty, He first promised and intended to her, the persecution ceases and sanctity returns, and God curses the sacrilege, and stirs up men’s minds to religious donatives, and all is well till she grows rich again.”²

Humility, meekness, and poverty of spirit, are the genial soil of true religion—tokens of the prevalence of Christ’s kingdom in the individual and in the church. Worldly greatness, large possessions, and superior authority are in themselves adverse to lowly, teachable, and forbearing dispositions ; and, notwithstanding many noble exceptions, tend generally to stunt or eradicate them. In fact, may we not affirm that the two principles of secular eminence and spiritual eminence lie in opposite directions ; being in their natures and in their results generally contrary ? Thus our Lord declared, “ How hard is it for them that have, or that trust in, riches, to enter into the kingdom of

¹ Matt. vii. 23.

² Life of Christ, i. 6.

God.”¹ “ Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it.”² “ If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.”³ If then we hold up a crown or a mitre, as the reward of piety, devotion, and the faithful exercise of spiritual gifts, we commit a dangerous mistake ; we tempt with mercenary motives to the relinquishment of those which are pure, we offer earthly prizes in opposition to such as are heavenly, we hand the cup of disease and death to promote health and vigour. Thus the seed of the kingdom, instead of growing upward toward heaven, refreshed by the dew and the shower, enlivened by the rays of the Sun of Righteousness, and bringing forth good fruit a hundred fold, is liable to be choked by briars and thorns, to be withered through the shallowness or ungratefulness of the soil, or to be devoured by the fowls of the air ; and little or no fruit is produced to perfection.

Yet considering that secular authority, when influenced by true religion and Christian motives, is highly beneficial to mankind, we cannot wonder that attempts should be made with the best intentions, to invest devotion and piety with power and greatness, and to unite the two, though totally unconnected in themselves, and independent of each other—the worldly and spiritual authority—in the same persons. Scripture and experience, however, assure us that the endeavour is generally vain. The rulers in the civil state are not qualified by that office to be rulers in the church ; far otherwise. Human weakness defeats the attempt. To endow the humble, devout Christian minister with worldly distinctions and power, is to employ means which are counteractive of humility, of the temper and services of devotion. On the other hand, it is not within the limited sphere of mortals, to invest the monarch and the statesman with the mantle of humility, or to breathe into them devout dispositions. The ministers and other officers of a professing Christian church may indeed enjoy outward wealth and authority, through the patronage and influence of a state or otherwise ; but in proportion as such is the case, experience generally shows that vital godliness is in a state of decay, and that there is so much less of the true character of the servants and the Church

¹ Mark x. 24.

² Mark viii. 35.

³ Luke ix. 23.

of Christ. Between the true church and the professing churches, there is, alas ! every amount of variety and difference, and the connexion with secular power has had no small share in producing the evil.

The Apostle James said, “ Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God ? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”¹ Quotations from the New Testament to this effect might be indefinitely multiplied.

But, it may be asked, if such is the case, are large possessions and great authority unlawful to the Christian ? The reply is, that they are at least highly dangerous to the spiritual welfare of the individual, apt to intoxicate the weak head, and to pervert by their “ deceitfulness ”² the fallible heart ; yet eminently useful, and tending to true honour, when rightly applied, under a due sense of the responsibility of the stewardship. The language of Christ to the young man who had great possessions was, “ Go, sell all that thou hast, &c.”³ Are then greatness and power to be confided to the irreligious and profane, and are the humble and pious to be treated with national neglect and contumely ? By no means. They are ever entitled to respect and true honour. Godliness is profitable unto all things, and, without our special provisions, has promise even of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. For statesmen and rulers, however, should be chosen men of moral character, enlightened piety, and Christian principle ; but rarely should ministers or other officers of religion be placed in elevated secular stations, lest the truth be perverted, and the consciences of individuals constrained by the influences of the State. And, on the other hand, let none be ministers or rulers of the church on account of any rank or influence in the world ; but such only as are believed to be called and qualified by the Lord for the work, distinguished by meekness, humility, and devotion, by conformity to the example of Jesus Christ. Let not emperors, princes, or presidents possess, in virtue of such offices, authority or even membership in the church. The emperor may deny the Christian faith, the prince may become an oppressor, or the president a profligate ; surely, in such cases, they are totally unfit to be the heads of churches of Christ,

¹ James iv. 4.

² Matt. xiii. 22.

³ Matt. xix. 21.

against whose spirit they have thus rebelled. On the contrary, they ought not to be sheltered, more than obscure private individuals, from the exercise of church discipline and censures. That the more enlightened and eminent are so much the more responsible, is the impartial Christian principle, without respect of persons. But that any moral delinquents, of whatever rank, should possess authority in spiritual matters, or be the arbiters in them, and control the church by the power of the state, is manifestly most incongruous. Nor, on the other hand, should the pious Christian minister or presbyter be invested for that reason with rank, wealth, and political greatness, so likely to prove detrimental to their sacred character and functions, and to induce motives and considerations of a totally different nature.¹

Bright instances have, it is well known, occurred, in which the great and powerful of this world have been eminently devout and religious; and, on the other hand, true Christian ministers and rulers in the church have exercised a wholesome and exemplary secular authority; but these are the rare exceptions, rather than the usual results.

The system of the supremacy of the state over the church, by an union between them, has obtained the name of "Erastianism," from Erasmus, a German writer of the sixteenth century. The pastoral office, according to him, was only persuasive; without any disciplinary authority. The privileges of the church were to be open to all—the minister might only dissuade—and the church could not exclude or censure the disqualified and vicious. He referred the system of church government, and the punishment of all offences and errors, whether civil or religious, to the state and its officers, as supreme over the church. The union of church and state, as it now exists, in many of the countries of Europe, though it may not exactly accord with these views, is generally termed the Erastian system.

On the other hand, the invasion of the state and of its powers

¹ A striking instance of the exercise of church discipline in the case of an Emperor who had been guilty of vindictive cruelty, occurred in the fourth century; when Theodosius was compelled by Ambrose, bishop of Milan, to make a public acknowledgment of his penitence, before he was admitted to the privileges of the church. The Popes frequently pronounced the censures of the Church on emperors and kings, but in most of such cases, the offences were more of a personal than of a religious or moral nature, and the object in view was to maintain the absolute supremacy of the Papal See.—*Milner's Church History*.

by the church is exemplified in the papacy, where the Pope, the chief officer of the church, has become a temporal prince, and rules with secular authority. The papists assert that the two swords, of which the disciples spoke to Christ,¹ represent the spiritual and temporal power, united in the hands of the Popes, their alleged successors. This notion overlooks the fact, however, that our Lord forbade the use of the outward sword, commanding Peter to put it into the sheath,² and predicting that they who use such weapons should perish by them³—a prophecy which has been largely fulfilled. Both these systems are at variance with the example and doctrine of Him, who declared himself to be a king, but his kingdom not to be of this world, and who forbade his disciples, as such, to exercise any other, than spiritual authority.

The sentiments advocated in this chapter are by no means new; but have become the growing conviction of enlightened Christians.

John Wycliffe, taking a scriptural view of the nature of a religious community, and of the spirit of Christ's law, maintained that his church ought to be essentially unlike a kingdom of this world, deriving its strength from the possession of an unworldly spirit, and providing for its temporal wants only by the willing contributions of its members. He declared that the highest authority of the church ought not to have of necessity any temporal dominion—that in all secular matters the ministers of religion should be subject to the magistrates—that wealth was oftener a curse than a blessing to them—that worldliness was inconsistent with the clerical character—and that their strength consisted in obvious, though not ostentatious self-denial. In his day, almost every office of profit or importance in the state and the palace was filled by an ecclesiastic, from that of lord chancellor, to the surveyor of the king's buildings, and the superintendent of his wardrobe.⁴ He complained strongly of this, and of the great temporalities of the church; and the parliament so far united with his views, as to petition the king that ecclesiastics might no longer hold offices of state. The practice continued, however, down to the time of the Reformation, and was encouraged by the court of Rome, whose dependents, if they did not possess the thrones of Europe, often overawed their occupants, and virtually ruled both the people and their sovereigns.

¹ Luke xxii. 38.

² John xviii. 11.

³ Matt. xxvi. 52.

⁴ Lives of British Reformers.

Among certain conclusions or reformations exhibited to the British Parliament in 1395, the sixth is as follows: “A king and a bishop both in one person, a prelate and a justice in temporal causes, a curate and an officer in worldly office, doth make every kingdom out of good order. The temporality and spirituality are two parts of the holy universal church; therefore, whoso addicteth himself to the one, let him not intermeddle with the other.”¹

William Tindal, about 1520, remarks on the text, “Whosoever shall humble himself as a little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven”—“that is, to be so childlike that thou couldst not heave thyself above thy brother, is the very bearing of rule and being great in Christ’s kingdom.”²

In the time of Henry VIII., the archbishops, prelates, and many of the clergy published a work, entitled “The Bishops’ Book,” in which they say:—

“ We think it convenient that all bishops and preachers shall instruct the people committed to their spiritual charge, that Christ did by express words prohibit his apostles, and all their successors, under pretence of authority given them by Him, from taking upon them the use of the sword—that is to say, the authority of kings or any civil power in this world. For the kingdom of Christ in his church is spiritual, and not a carnal kingdom of the world. He himself, his apostles, and disciples, sought to bring all nations from the carnal kingdom of the prince of darkness, to the light of his spiritual kingdom, that he might reign in the hearts of the people by grace, faith, hope, and charity. Therefore, Christ did never seek or exercise any worldly dominion, but rather refusing and fleeing from it, did leave the government of kingdoms, realms, and nations, to princes and potentates, as he found them ; and commanded also his apostles and disciples to do the same. Whatsoever priest or bishop will arrogate or presume to take upon him any such authority, and will pretend the authority of the gospel for his defence, he crowneth Christ again with a crown of thorns, traduceth him, and bringeth him forth with his purple robe, to be mocked and scorned by the world.”³

¹ Fox’s Acts and Mon. vol. ii. 578.

² Discipline of a Christian Man.

³ Fox’s Acts and Mon. vol. ii. 288.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH OF CHRIST.

ACCORDING to the testimony of scripture, all true Christians—those who are regenerate, who really believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and desire to obey his commandments, according to the degree of light afforded them, are subjects of his spiritual kingdom, and members of his universal church, whatever may be their advantages or disadvantages, their reputation or disrepute among men. Or, to express the same thing in scriptural terms, the members of the true Church of Christ are those everywhere, who have been “baptized by one spirit into one body;”¹ who, believing in Christ, “abide in” him, as the branches in the vine;² and who “hear his voice and follow him,”³ as the sheep hear and follow their shepherd.

Though Christ’s church is termed universal, because limited to no one body of men ; yet how small is the number of its real members, as compared with the bulk of mankind, or even with the many who are his professed followers ! And why is this ? but because in acts we too often deny him, whom in words we acknowledge ; because our hearts and lives are not subject to the government of his Spirit !

Notwithstanding the bold assumption of particular denominations or classes, it is our high privilege, if we are true Christians, to believe that “one is our Master, even Christ, and that all we are brethren.”⁴ Consoling and humbling is this view of the great spiritual brotherhood — the universal Church of Christ ; consisting even on earth of a “great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues;”⁵ “washed and brought nigh by the blood of Christ,”⁶ partakers of his grace and redemption. And the nearer they are brought to him, as the common centre and fountain of their faith, righteousness and hope, the nearer also will they assuredly

¹ Cor. xii. 13.

² John xv.

³ John x.

⁴ Matt. xxiii. 8.

⁵ Rev. vii. 9.

⁶ Eph. ii. 13 ; Rev. i. 5.

be brought one to another in him, and united together in a sense of his heavenly love. Is not this "the holy catholic church," and the true "communion of saints?"

While each feels a deep conviction of the truth of that view of gospel doctrines which he especially professes, and a lively interest in its wide diffusion, his heart is expanded with love to others, who hold the great truths of our common religion in a devout Christian temper, but who may yet in some respects differ from him, in the mode of apprehending or expressing them. He cannot, indeed, have fellowship with darkness and error, but feels bound to reprove them; yet he can thankfully unite with that which is truly good, in whomsoever it is found, and can rejoice in its existence and extension. Painfully sensible that he himself is not free from ignorance, frailties, and evil, he will be ready to make allowance for defects in others, whose advantages may not have been equal to his own; remembering the searching appeal of our Lord, "Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone."¹

So diversified are we in the constitution of our minds, in the measure and nature of our gifts, and in the tendency of education and experience, that it is not to be expected, in this imperfect state, even with the same good Spirit for influence and direction, that all men should perceive or feel exactly alike. As there is a pleasing variety in the outward and material system, so doubtless differences were wisely designed in the mental and spiritual constitution, and must in the nature of things exist, for good though hidden purposes. While therefore we hold fast the truth as made known to ourselves, let us regard charitably all the differing results of the present varied organizations, and thankfully accept those means which an all-wise Creator has placed within our reach, for the harmony, the happiness, and the benefit of ourselves and of others.

Even in apostolic times, the views of all the believers did not exactly accord on every point. Some esteemed one day above another, others esteemed every day alike. One believed that he might eat all things, another who was weak restricted himself to herbs. Which of them had authority to determine that his own view alone was right, and that all other views were wrong? or to thank God that he was not as other men were? or to

¹ John viii. 7.

condemn the rest as “heretics” or “schismatics?” The injunction of the Apostle Paul was, that they should not judge or despise one another; but that “every man” should “be fully persuaded in his own mind.”¹

And, indeed, inconsiderable and occasional differences of sentiment, when allowed to operate rightly, by constraining us to examine more closely our own experience and evidences, tend, through the power of divine grace, to strengthen our standing, and to call up some of the finer feelings of the chastened mind, in humiliation of self and in charity towards others. As the various but nicely adjusted physical influences retain the heavenly bodies in beautiful order in the firmament, each occupying its right position, and pursuing its respective orbit; so may the different states and well-balanced attractions of Christian feeling operate, under the divine blessing, on the humble and obedient mind; tending, without compromise or unfaithfulness, to maintain in harmony denominational zeal on the one hand, with a good degree of charity and fellowship towards all who may in some respects differ, on the other; and preserving alive close attention to individual judgment and duty, amidst general forbearance, moderation, and love.²

To the maintenance of entire religious unity, two elements appear to be essential,—the one, an agreement on the doctrines entertained; and the other, a right frame of mind to uphold them. Full Christian fellowship depends greatly on the amount of both, and is obstructed by a deficiency in either. Even a large degree of orthodoxy may be professed in a pharisaical, self-righteous spirit, and “the truth” may be held, “in unrighteousness;”³ while, on the other hand, so great is the divine

¹ Rom. xiv. 5.

² The Anglican Church, in her ninth canon, speaks of dissenters in the following strong terms: “Whosoever shall hereafter separate themselves from the communion of saints, as it is approved by the apostles’ rules in the Church of England, and combine themselves together in a new brotherhood; accounting the Christians who are conformable to the doctrine, government, rites and ceremonies of the Church of England, to be profane, and unmeet for them to join with in Christian profession; let them be excommunicated *ipso facto*,” &c. This requires no comment, except that, with similar denunciations of ecclesiastical rulers, it is *ipso facto* obsolete, and ought long ago to have been expunged.

³ Rom. i. 18.

condescension, that, though the spiritual eye may be but partially opened to the discoveries of divine truth, and may be able only to "see men as trees walking,"¹ yet the heart may be warmed and expanded with the influences of heavenly love. Between such, if they truly love Christ, though they may not see altogether alike, there may be a consoling degree of Christian unity and charity. How many of us, alas, are in this half-enlightened condition, for want of maintaining a larger measure of faith and obedience! Well is it for all, in this state of limited apprehension, in which we see but in part, and know but in part,² often to remember the vision sent for the instruction of Peter, that zealous Israelite, that he might not judge severely and partially, when the voice came to him from heaven, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common."³ We shall then be brought to confess with him "that God is no respecter of persons, but that, in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted of him."

The humble believer will desire to bear in mind that all are partakers of divine benevolence and light, that "Christ died for all,"⁴ that "the grace of God has appeared to all men,"⁵ and that "to his own Master every man must stand or fall."⁶ Thankfully sensible that the requirements from each will be in just proportion to the degree of grace and opportunity afforded, he will rejoice in the assurance that the universal church of Christ knows no natural distinction of colour, clime, class, or people; that "God giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not;" and that all are invited to be fellow-partakers of life and salvation. If tempted to inquire, "And what shall this man do?" he will recollect the reprehensive answer, "What is that to thee? follow thou me;"⁷ and while endeavouring closely to fulfil his own convictions of the truth, he will humbly rejoice to say, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."⁸

The Donatists, in the fourth century, like many later Christians, held that the spiritual body of Christ consists of all those scattered throughout the world, who actually belong to him through

¹ Mark viii. 24.

² 1 Cor. xiii. 9.

³ Acts x. 15.

⁴ 2 Cor. v. 15.

⁵ Titus ii. 11.

⁶ Rom. xiv. 4.

⁷ John xxi. 22.

⁸ Eph. vi. 24.

faith and love ; and that this body, by its union with him, as the head, daily grows into a holy temple of God. These they distinguished from such as draw near to him with the lip, but in heart are far from him ; saying that everything depends on the question, to which of these classes every one in heart belongs.¹

¹ Neander's Church History, vol. ii.

CHAPTER IV.

OF PARTICULAR CHRISTIAN CHURCHES.

FREQUENT reference is made in the New Testament to particular churches or congregations, such as “the seven churches of Asia,”¹ “the church that is in his house,”² &c. The enquiry thus naturally arises, What is a church? A Christian church is an association of believers in Christ, whether more or less numerous or dispersed, whose hearts have been effectually reached by the power of the Holy Spirit, who endeavour in unison to worship and serve God, and to promote the spiritual good of each other and of those around them, according to a common apprehension of his will; striving to exalt and extend his kingdom, that he may reign supreme, animating, leading, and restraining them by his Holy Spirit, and guiding them into all truth. By subjection to the government of Christ’s Spirit, each individual and every particular church are constituted integral parts of the great church universal, of which Christ is the glorified and ever present Head. Without this union with him, they can have no vitality as a spiritual body, however high in outward profession. But in proportion as they are subject to his divine government, so do they form a pure church, living fruit-bearing branches in the vine Christ Jesus.

True Christian unity may be pronounced to be no small attainment—not a mere accordance of sentiment on points of doctrine and practice, but a oneness with Christ, and with fellow-believers in him. It is the fulfilment of that for which the Redeemer of men graciously supplicated: “neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us!”³ How greatly deficient are Christians generally from the experience of this sacred, spiritual oneness, in Christ and with each other, through our own faithlessness and disobedience!

¹ Rev. i. 4.

² Col. iv. 15.

³ John xvii. 20, 21.

Every Christian is bound to seek for the help of the Holy Spirit, to enable him not only to arrive at a determinate judgment on matters of faith and doctrine, but also to make outward declaration of his love to Christ, by becoming a member of such particular church as may most accord with his own convictions; and to maintain the principles of that church in preference to all others, but with entire charity towards their members.

The fellowship and unity prevailing in the universal church will, by the nature of things, be more intimate and entire in a particular one. Harmony in sentiment and action, as well as in profession, ought to prevail, and to form a strong and close link of union between the members. Yet such are the imperfections of human nature, that even here, under a fair degree of liberty in enquiry and thought, conscientious variations of sentiment often exist on minor points, and call for the continual and wholesome exercise of charity and forbearance. One may view certain passages of scripture in one sense, and another may view them in another sense; one may esteem certain points of doctrine or practice more highly than another; yet all may cordially unite in the same general views. Diversities are doubtless wisely permitted; and when of moderate extent, and not subversive of fundamental principles, need not occasion any breach of concord or general unity; otherwise many a conscientious individual would be compelled to become *ecclesia per se*. To insist on entire identity of opinion on unimportant matters, is an unreasonable invasion of individual liberty, and tends to oppression and contention. Happy and profitable is that disposition, which delights to dwell on points of agreement more than on those of discordance, and which is preserved in humility, confidence, and love; remembering that all men, by no means excepting ourselves, are fallible, and that Christ is the only Arbiter of conscience, and the final Judge."¹

The question, What is a true Christian church? is one of

¹ The 19th Article of the Established Church of England asserts that "the visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments are duly ministered, according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same." This definition implies much more than it plainly expresses; and, when closely considered, is found to be of a very restrictive meaning. Where those rites are not observed, or where

great moment, and subject to misinterpretation of a highly injurious tendency. Some appear to imagine that the ecclesiastical officers, the ministers, and the dignitaries, constitute the church ; whereas the Christian church is repeatedly represented in the New Testament, as the whole body of true believers generally, and of such in each place particularly. The officers and ministers, therefore, are not the church—they may be only a priestly aristocracy ; though for ages they have been accounted the church by many, and have usurped its name, with too much of its authority and property. Rather they ought to be its agents, servants, and instruments under the divine hand for its benefit. Moreover the riches, the worldly honour and influence of such agents or officers, instead of being proofs of the true prosperity of a church, are too often symptoms of its worldly character, its corruption and decay.

May it not be asserted that the true evidence of the healthiness and prosperity of any particular church is to be found in the self-denial, devotion, and christian conduct of its members, the spiritual qualifications and faithfulness of its ministers, the purity of its faith, and the soundness of its discipline ? in other words, in the pure doctrines professed, and in the good fruits borne, by the society or church, collectively and individually ? Thus will it become a part of the true universal church of Christ—which is the chief object ever to be kept in view.

Men may establish particular churches of good profession, and endow them richly ; they may procure for them the support of the great and the learned, or the patronage of the state ; but they cannot by these means ensure, or even promote, their spiritual character as “the body of Christ,” having an immediate union with Him, the ever-living Head ; nor can they ensure their existence as true churches, sections of His great church universal. Such means will rather tend to lessen the necessary sense of immediate dependence upon Him, and to fix the reliance on outward and human supports. Will not such churches become like “the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord ?” Of such

they are observed in a manner different from the legal forms, there of course, according to this definition, is no Christian church ; and where the congregation are not faithful, there too, be it remembered, is no visible church of Christ.

an one it is said, in a spiritual sense, that “ he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh ; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.”¹ Better is it for a Christian church to be low, poor, afflicted, and despised ; and more likely to drive her to seek the favour of her Lord, than to be exalted on the pinnacle of grandeur, and thus led to forget her spiritual need, her ever-dependent condition.

Wicliffe declared it to be his opinion, that the idea of the Christian church, gathered exclusively from the New Testament, is not only not represented in the existing state of Christendom, but is opposed by it. He saw that for the clergy to consider and to call themselves the church could not be right, and that they ought not to use spiritual functions to promote temporal ends. He asserted that the Church of Christ consists not of clergy only, nor chiefly, but of all Christians ; that lordship and rule are forbidden, ministration and service commanded, in the office of the Christian clergy—their power being simply ministerial.²

The Bohemians and other reformers held, in contradiction to the general opinion of their time, that the church was not constituted of the Pope, Cardinals, Archbishops, and clergy, but of all true Christians. But in a conventional sense, when any particular church is spoken of, the term is intended to apply to those who are visibly associated together, by outward profession, in one religious union or society. With this meaning the term is generally used in the present treatise. As, for instance, the Protestant Episcopal Church, or established Church of England ; the Wesleyan Church or Connexion, &c., &c. Taken in this sense, a church may be said to be either decaying or flourishing, corrupt or pure.

While some churches are united to the state to their own spiritual injury, others independent of state support may be equally dead, through an union with the spirit of this world in some one or other of its numerous modes of development. Many churches too much resemble great moral machines, contrived by the worldly, covetous, and ambitious, to aggrandise themselves, and to enthrall others, under the cloak of a zeal for Christ. How far are such from the spirit and conduct of him,

¹ Jer. xvii. 5, 6.

² Gilpin's Life of Wicliffe.

who sought not in his own person human wealth or glory at the cost of duty, but cast them from him, saying to the tempter, "Get thee behind me Satan,"¹ and thus set a memorable example to his spiritual body—the church, to do the same in all ages!

It was observed by Montesquieu, that "the prosperity of religion is different from that of civil government," and that "the periods of the humiliation and dispersion of the church, the destruction of her temples, and the persecution of her martyrs, are the distinguishing times of her glory:" but that, "On the contrary, when she appears triumphant in the eye of the world, she is generally sinking in adversity."²

They who are real members of Christ's church, are such as have known the work of regeneration through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, being joined to that living body, of which Christ is the glorified head, their hearts purified by that faith which works by love, their affections redeemed from the world, and set on things above, and their lives bearing witness thereto.

If such be the conditions of membership in the great Christian church, it becomes us all seriously to consider what we know of these experiences in ourselves, and how far we come short of the high standard set before us in the gospel. It is evident that neither our numbers, wealth, talents, learning, influence, nor any other worldly consideration, will be any test of our advancement or standing in this respect. Scripture indeed assures us, that "that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."³ But we are all too liable to judge of spiritual things by the fallible reasonings of man; and to exclaim of the divine injunctions and judgments, "These are hard sayings, who can bear or hear them?"⁴

To every healthy, well-ordered, Christian church, the author submits that the following external matters are essential:—

1st. The members of the church at large must have a voice or share, with respect to its management, appointments, and profession; and to them the ultimate appeal must be made in cases of difficulty.

¹ Luke iv. 8.

² De la grandeur et de la decadence des Romains.

³ Luke xvi. 15.

⁴ John vi. 60.

2nd. Membership must be definite ; marking the line between such as are members, and others who are only approvers.

3rd. A system of discipline must be maintained, for the admission of members, and for the separation or reproof of those who offend in morals, or who differ in faith or practice.

4th. A clear exposition or record of doctrine and practice, in harmony with the New Testament, must exist for reference and guidance.

5th. Periodical assemblies of the church, and not of the ministers only or mainly, must be held for the management of its affairs ; and these assemblies must be religious in their character, with due reference to Christ as the head of every true church, and with a desire to be directed by his Holy Spirit.

6th. The duty of providing for the wants of the poor members is strongly enforced by the example of the apostolical churches ; but not the practice of providing specially for the ministers.

The number and variations of particular Protestant churches have long been reproachfully urged against them by Roman Catholics. They form, however, no just ground for real reproach. We do not condemn the variety of colours or forms in a garden, or of foliage in a forest. The energy of mind, and the freedom of judgment, which, in humble dependence on the teachings of Christ by his Spirit, and by his written word, are the element and the glory of Protestantism, naturally lead, through the constitutional infirmity and variety of the human mind, and the difference of circumstances, to diversity of sentiment. Yet this probably is not greater among the reformed than among the Romanists themselves, wherever the mind is not enthralled by spiritual oppression ; and, in fact, it is chiefly caused by the various degrees in which they have severally renounced the errors of Romanism. The discordance and the jealousies, between the various orders of friars and monks, between the Jansenists and the Jesuits, the regular and the secular priests, are probably just as great, other circumstances considered, as among the different sects of the Protestant faith. Better is the freedom of the Reformation with all its consequences, united as most of its possessors are in the great fundamental principles of Christianity, than a constrained and hollow uniformity of profession, teeming with superstition, immorality, and unbelief, among both priests and people. Creeds and confessions of faith, the authority of

kings, popes, and councils, and the strong arm of persecution, can never establish unity of conviction. But when the professors of Christianity, in the various parties, both Catholic and Protestant, partake more largely of the spirit of Christ, and when their conduct is brought more entirely under its leavening, uniting influence, they must and will be more fully of one heart and of one mind; minor differences will be merged and swallowed up in the love of God, and of one another; and then will they set to the Jewish, to the Mahometan, and to the heathen world, an inviting example, conformable to the pattern of Christ. May that blessed period speedily arrive!

CHAPTER V.

FIGURATIVE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN HOLY SCRIPTURE.

THE pure Christian church is represented in Holy Scripture under various striking and teaching figures ; which, though familiar to most readers, are full of deep instruction, and therefore worthy of special consideration.

The intimate union and communion of the members of the church with Christ, are plainly set forth in that figure, which represents the church as his body, united to himself the living Head. “ That we henceforth may grow up into him, in all things, which is the head, even Christ ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love.”¹ “ Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”² What do we know of this “ effectual working in the measure of every part,” preserving health in the body itself and in every member ?

The close, vital, and necessary connexion with Christ is apparent from the emblem of the vine and the branches. “ I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine ; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches ; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit ; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered ; and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit ; so shall

¹ Eph. iv. 15, 16.

² 1 Cor. xii. 27.

ye be my disciples."¹ How searching should be our individual examination, whether we are cleansed in spirit, abiding in Christ, and bringing forth the fruits of holiness? or whether we are in a state of alienation and severance from him, polluted, unfruitful, and withered? And since this latter condition may have come upon us gradually and imperceptibly, the more necessary is such an examination to be frequently made.

Another impressive metaphor, often used for the true Christian church, is that of a house or building, whose foundation or chief corner stone is Christ. "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."² The same figure is employed by another Apostle: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together, for an habitation of God, through the Spirit."³

The contrariety of this corner stone to the notions of the worldly wise builders or professors, is clearly expressed by Christ and by his apostles, in confirmation of the great truth which it is the purpose of the present treatise to illustrate—that churches built up by the authority and wisdom of man are in great danger of resting on these as their foundation, and not on Christ the "rock;" while the building which he sanctifies and upholds is liable to be despised and rejected by men. "Unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed is made the head of the corner; and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence."⁴ May Christ, the only foundation of the true church, never become an offence to any of us, through our own faithlessness, spiritual pride and disobedience!

The church of God, under the former dispensation, was to be found chiefly among the children of Israel, who practised circumcision as an outward sign commanded by him. And of the church under the gospel dispensation, the Apostle Paul thus speaks: "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in

¹ John xv. 1—8. ² 1 Peter ii. 4, 5. ³ Eph. ii. 19, 22. ⁴ 1 Peter ii. 7, 8.

the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”¹ An impressive description is this of the spiritual character and profession of the evangelical church, and very opposite to the sentiment that another outward observance has been set up, in the place of that which is acknowledged to be abrogated.

Not dissimilar in tendency, is the figure representing the church of Christ as the child of promise, the son of Abraham by Sarah, the free-woman; while the legal dispensation is described as his son by Agar, the bond-woman; and the two are declared to answer to the two covenants, of the heavenly Jerusalem and of Mount Sinai—the gospel and the law. The former, says the Apostle, “is free, and is the mother of us all;” while the latter is still “in bondage with her children,” under the elements of the world. Nevertheless, what saith the scripture? “Cast out the bond-woman and her son, for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman.” May Christian professors consider seriously this significant language, with the injunction annexed to it:—“So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free. Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”² How does the profession of Christianity still groan in many churches, under the yoke of outward rites and observances, deprived of that spiritual freedom which Christ designed to be enjoyed; the son of the bond-woman still dividing the inheritance with the son of the free-woman, and often largely usurping it!

One of the most natural and impressive figures employed in the Bible for the universal church of Christ, is that of a chaste virgin or bride, espoused to her husband. The beauty of this metaphor—the sweetness and purity, the love and faithfulness indicated by its characters, reach the heart, and convince the understanding; pointing out, more clearly than a multitude of laboured arguments, the pure character, the faithful love, and the simple dependence of the true Christian church.

On the other hand, what an idea does it not convey of the infinite loving kindness and condescension of the Son of God!—that he not only loves, “nourishes and cherishes”³ the church,

¹ Phil. iii. 3.

² Gal. iv. 22, 31; and v. 1.

³ Ephes. v. 29.

as a bridegroom does his bride, but that this love was so transcendent, that for her sake when yet afar off, he came down from heaven, took humanity upon him in its humbler form, and shed his precious blood as a sacrifice for her, that he might present her to himself "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."¹

But there is another point of view, in which this figure is at present principally to be considered; representing the fact that the Church of Christ may, and too generally does, depart from the undivided love of him who permits himself to be regarded as her espoused Lord; and, while professing to be his, commits adultery with the spirit of the world, the prince of the power of the air, his declared enemy. Instead of accepting the love, and obeying the commands, of her rightful Head, she too often listens to the suggestions of the god of this world, gives place to his deceitful pleadings of expediency, honour, and enjoyment, and frustrates the gracious designs of Christ; destroying her own and his children, or delivering them up, under specious pretences, to the arch deceiver.

Thus, through perverted views, with impure motives, and for unworthy objects, the visible churches have too often connected themselves with the powers of the world; and for want of faith and love, and of simply waiting and relying upon Christ for guidance, support, and protection, have embraced the aid of human wisdom, of the arm of flesh, the powers of states and monarchs, yielding to their purposes and using them for their own—so that who can now truly assert that the outward church, under many of her forms, is really the chaste bride of Christ; that her authority is not in a large degree that of this world; that she is sincerely influenced by his Spirit and love, and not by the spirit and wisdom which are from beneath?

These illustrations lead to the conclusion, that the purity of the church is contaminated and destroyed, if we resort to carnal means of constraint or temptation in order to uphold it. That it is inconsistent with the spiritual nature of the religion of Jesus Christ, to accept temporal rewards merely for the performance of sacred duties, and the exercise of ministerial gifts; to enforce the observances or support of any professing Christian church by the power of the state, or to visit with pains, penalties,

¹ Eph. v. 27.

or the loss of civil privileges and property, any who conscientiously differ from it. In fact, do not such proceedings clearly show that, instead of the pure and faithful bride of Christ, confiding in the love, and truthfulness and power of her Lord for protection and support, another and a lower character has been more or less adopted, termed in scripture-language the adulteress and the harlot?¹

Every admixture of evil, in whatever shape, doubtless tends towards the same result; and it is necessary for us all, as individuals, and for every professing church, whether upheld by secular power or not, often to consider seriously which of these spiritual characters belongs to us, or in what degrees both are partaken of. Inconstant, inconsistent man too often yields but a partial and divided allegiance to his sovereign Lord; serving at times or in part "the law of God," and again rebelling, and serving "the law of sin."² But though such a serious consideration is profitable and necessary for all; yet the figure alluded to appears to have been used in scripture, with special reference to the endeavour to connect the holy interests of the spiritual kingdom and Church of Christ with worldly power and influence, and to uphold and enforce the one by the other; in positive contradiction to his own solemn declaration, that his kingdom is not of this world, and to the whole tenor of the New Testament.

In an ancient treatise, which is supposed to have been written by one of the early reformers, Antichrist, Babylon, the mother of harlots, &c., is looked upon, with much reason, not merely as a church, or a succession of persons, but as a false superstitious system; perverting the truth by the traditions of men, and the church by the adjuncts of secular power, introducing worldly motives and principles, and destroying the life and essence of true religion.³

On the text, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come," &c., Archbishop Leighton says:—"What is the shining of the true

¹ In accordance with the same figure, the children of Israel are frequently described in the Old Testament (see Exod. xxxiv. 15; Ezek. vi. 9; Lev. xx. 6,) as "going a whoring after other gods," or "after idols," or "after wizards," and forsaking the only true God, who had been as a husband unto them.

² Rom. vii. 22, 23.

³ Fox's Acts and Mon.

church? Doth not a church shine, when church service is raised from a decent and primitive simplicity, and decored with pompous ceremonies, with rich furniture and gaudy vestments? Is not the church then beautiful? Yes, indeed! but all the question is, whether this be the proper, genuine beauty or no?—whether this be not strange fire? Methinks it cannot be better decided than to refer it to St. John, in his book of the Revelation. We find there the descriptions of two several women; the one riding in state, arrayed in purple, decked with gold and precious stones and pearl; the other in rich attire too, but of another kind—clothed with the sun, and a crown of twelve stars on her head. The other's decoremnt was all earthly, this woman's is all celestial. What need she borrow light and beauty from precious stones, that is clothed with the sun and crowned with stars? Now you know which of these two is the spouse of Christ. The truth is, those things seem to deck religion, but they undo it. Observe where they are most used, and we shall find little or no substance of devotion under them; as we see in that apostate church of Rome. This painting is dishonourable to Christ's spouse, and besides, it spoils her natural complexion.”¹

¹ Leighton's Sermons.

CHAPTER VI.

THE INFLUENCES EXERTED IN THE TRUE CHURCH, OR KINGDOM OF CHRIST, ARE THOSE OF LOVE AND TRUTH ; NEITHER VIOLENCE NOR INSINCERITY HAVING ANY PART IN IT.

THE Most High was often termed, under the legal dispensation, "The Lord of Hosts,"¹ or armies; but the distinguishing character, by which he is pleased to reveal himself in the gospel, is that of "our Father in Heaven."² Here he pre-eminently deals with man in love. This was the character of the Saviour's mission; and in that love the Father has sent the Comforter, or Holy Spirit, in his name, to abide with the church for ever. Christ declared that love is the disposition or test, by which his followers should be known to all men;³ and we are assured that, if charity and forbearance do not influence our hearts and actuate our conduct, vain are our pretensions to be his disciples, and our applications for forgiveness of sin.⁴

No moral principles or commandments, more elevated, more practical, or more benign, were ever promulgated, than those of love to God and love to man. But secular as well as doctrinal Christianity is too apt to eat out practical Christianity, by introducing a worldly spirit, opposed to the meekness and self-denial of Christ.

Pure love is necessarily associated with sincerity and truthfulness. Its aspirations are from the bottom of the heart; its language is simple and unmasked; its actions are the reflection of the glow which pervades the soul. Deceit no less than violence is abhorrent to this genuine affection. That true love which is full of sincerity shone conspicuously in our holy Redeemer. Under his dispensation, divine truth, which had long been partially developed through types and figures, was clearly unfolded. He declared of himself that he came into the

¹ 1 Sam. i. 11, &c.

² John xiii. 35.

³ Matt. vi. 9, &c.

⁴ Matt. xviii. 35.

world to "bear witness to the truth,"¹ being "the way, the truth, and the life."² On the contrary, the devil is represented as "a murderer from the beginning,"—"a liar, and the father of lies."³ Thus also will the followers of each be distinguished. Charity and sincerity will always animate the true Christian, and shine forth in his devotion and conduct; while, in whatever degree we are influenced by opposite principles, in the same degree, we may rest assured, we are rebelling against Christ, and serving another lord and master.

If then any endeavour to sustain that which they believe to be the kingdom of Christ, by employing bribes and motives of self-interest, or by using compulsion; and thus promote insincerity in religious profession, for the sake of outward conformity and advantage, or even with a view to uphold the truth itself; it is evident that they adopt means which are inconsistent with our Lord's benign and truthful system—means held by him in utter abhorrence, and incapable of producing the end professed—that of extending the rule of the Prince of Peace in truth and love. But it is to be feared that, besides employing unchristian means, and instead of upholding the church and kingdom of Christ, they are promoting the reign of antichrist, the spirit of deceit and wrath. Rewards or intimidation may produce hypocrisy and time-serving, but they can never carry conviction to the understanding, or kindle the warmth of genuine devotion in the soul.

A sensible writer has well remarked, that "men have been very long in discovering, and even yet seem scarcely to have discovered, that true religion is of too delicate a nature to be compelled by the coarse implements of human authority and worldly sanctions. Let the law of the land restrain vice and injustice of every kind, as ruinous to the peace and order of society, for this is its proper province; but let it not tamper with religion, by attempting to enforce its exercises and duties. These, unless they be freewill offerings, are nothing, they are worse [than nothing]. By such an unnatural alliance and ill-judged aid, hypocrisy and superstition may indeed be promoted, but genuine piety never fails to suffer."⁴

"I esteem," says Locke, "the mutual toleration of Christians,

¹ John xviii. 37. ² John xiv. 6.

³ John viii. 44. ⁴ Campbell's Lectures on Ecclesiastical History.

in their different professions of religion, to be characteristic of the true church. For whatever some people boast of the antiquity of places and names, or the pomp of their outward worship, others of the reformation of their discipline, all of the orthodoxy of their faith—for every one is orthodox to himself—these things, and all others of this nature, are much rather marks of men's striving for power and empire over one another, than of the church of Christ. Let any one have ever so true a claim to all these things; yet if he be destitute of charity, meekness, and goodwill in general towards all mankind, even to those that are not Christians, he is certainly still short of being a true Christian himself.”¹

Man, in his fallen unregenerate state, is dark, corrupt, and prone to evil; but when, through “the manifestation of the spirit, given to every man to profit withal,”² he is enabled to see and feel the love of God in Jesus Christ, then he is incited to “love him who first loved us,”³ and to surrender his naturally perverse will to the divine will. Thus he partakes of that “redemption that is in Christ.”⁴ That freedom to choose the good, and to refuse the evil, which was lost through the fall of Adam, is restored, through the mercy of the Redeemer, “the last Adam;”⁵ the benefit of that “one offering ”⁶ made for sin is experienced; and man is raised, through the free gift of God, to a state of spiritual intelligence, and liberty of choice and action; being enabled to “do those things that are pleasing in his sight,”⁷ and to work out his own salvation;⁸ but altogether dependent on the grace of his Saviour for this condition, and constantly liable, as he neglects and forsakes that grace, to fall into evil. Love to God, and the grateful sense of his unmerited mercy, become, through faith, man's accepted and prevailing motives; and the purity of these motives constitutes, as far as he himself is concerned, the value of all his words and actions in the things of God.

If we attempt to produce the same apparently good results, through the substitution of other and inferior motives—through the hope of outward rewards or privileges, or the fear of temporal privations, either among Christians in general, or in the

¹ Letters on Toleration.

² 1 Cor. xii. 7.

³ 1 John iv. 19.

⁴ Romans iii. 24.

⁵ 1 Cor. iv. 45.

⁶ Heb. x. 14.

⁷ 1 John iii. 22.

⁸ Phil. ii. 12.

most sacred departments of the church, we introduce a nullifying and withering principle, we undermine the groundwork of holiness, we destroy its free, pure, and genuine spring, the love and filial fear of God. No greater injury can we do to the profession of Christianity, than by thus eating out its core, and corrupting its heart. Such injuries soon show themselves in external decay, in symptoms of disease and death ; and all these effects are the more serious and aggravated, when the pernicious influences are brought to operate on the ministry of the gospel, the more important functions of the Christian church.

To turn to another branch of the subject. The cause of the Reformation in various parts of Europe was seriously injured by the conduct of its professors, in resorting to arms for their own defence, when persecuted and attacked ; instead of patiently and meekly following the example of Our Lord and his apostles. By such a course they forsook the true principles of the Messiah's kingdom, and lowered their own standing into that of political antagonists. Thus relying on the arm of flesh, and on outward weapons, they were soon overcome ; whereas by faith in divine protection, with spiritual armour, and appeals to scripture and to the consciences of their opponents, they would have stood on invincible ground.

" I ever understood," says William Penn, " that impartial liberty of conscience, was the natural right of all men ; and that he that had a religion without it, his religion was none of his own. For what is not the religion of a man's choice, is the religion of him that imposes it. So that liberty of conscience is the first step to have a religion. Yet I have constantly declared that a bound ought to be set to this liberty, and that morality was the best ; and that as often as that was violated under a pretence of conscience, it was fit the civil power should take place."¹ Again he says, " nothing has more lessened the credit of any religion, than declining to support itself by its own charity and piety, and taking sanctuary in the arms, rather than the understandings of men. Violences are ill pillars for truth to rest upon."²

¹ Penn's Letter to Popple.

² Persuasive to Toleration.

CHAPTER VII.

THE UNION OF CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY AMONG THE ISRAELITES: THE FIGURATIVE NATURE OF THE OLD COVENANT, AND OF THE PREDICTIONS RELATING TO THE NEW COVENANT AND CHURCH OF CHRIST.

IT has often been objected, in reference to the subject under consideration, that the ancient Israelites are a memorable example of the union of civil and religious authority, sanctioned by the Most High, and one therefore which we cannot gainsay or question.

To form a correct judgment on this head, however, the extraordinary nature of that theocracy or divine government must be considered, in which the Israelites differed from every other people. They were under the explicit teaching and government of God himself, through Moses and the other prophets; being favoured with the express revelation of the divine will, in a manner unknown to any nation besides. The Lord of Hosts condescended to tabernacle among them, with outward sensible evidences and majesty; directing their movements; giving them a law and a priesthood; establishing their worship, sacrifices, and ordinances; and making with them a written covenant.

But the law was designed as "the shadow of good things to come,"¹ it was "a schoolmaster"² to conduct to Christ. Its outward covenant and commandments, engraven on stone, were typical of the new and everlasting covenant with all the families of the earth; of the law to be placed in the mind and written on the heart,³ by an enlarged outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the gospel. Moses himself, the leader, and Aaron, the high priest of the Israelites, were emblems of Christ,—the spiritual leader of the Israel of God, and their High Priest for ever, after another and higher order than that of Aaron. And who are the chosen people of God in the present gospel day? Not one

¹ Heb. x. 1.

² Gal. iii. 24.

³ Jer. xxxi. 33.

particular nation or visible church ; but those without distinction, in every nation, who fear him and work righteousness. So that now, “he is not a Jew, who is one outwardly ; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh ; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter ; whose praise is not of men but of God.”¹

As then the ancient Israelites had an outward government and priesthood, the outward temple, altar, and sacrifices, appointed by the Almighty : so now in the gospel these types and shadows are fulfilled ; and the spiritual Israel, wherever situated among various nations and sections, are privileged to dwell under his divine and spiritual government, and under the heavenly eternal high-priesthood of Christ ; having the heart for their temple and altar, there “to offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through” him.² In the type, the divine government was outward, or of the nature of this world ; in the antitype, the government or kingdom of Christ is, according to his own declarations, “within,”³ and “not of this world.”⁴

The Jews, we are assured, fell through unbelief in Christ ; for “they stumbled at that stumbling-stone,”⁵ which is the foundation and “the head of the corner,”⁶ in the gospel building ; and “now is salvation come unto the Gentiles.”⁷ Let us then take a comprehensive view of our higher and more spiritual dispensation, being the fulfilment of those ancient promises, that Christ should bruise the head of the serpent, that in him all the nations of the earth should be blessed, and that the Spirit of God should be poured out on all flesh. For want of sufficiently recognising the typical nature of the legal dispensation, and perceiving its end and spiritual fulfilment in the gospel, the professing Christian churches have too generally imitated and perpetuated the outward — rested in the shadow, the form, and the letter ; and overlooked their high spiritual privileges. There have been and still are attempts to make a gain and monopoly of godliness,⁸ and of the Christian ministry ; to set up afresh an outward priesthood ; to re-establish outward temples, altars, sacrifices, offerings, washings, tithes, days, and other ritual observances. All these, however, it is believed, were

¹ Rom. ii. 28.

² 1 Pet. ii. 5.

³ Luke xvii. 21.

⁴ John xviii. 36.

⁵ Rom. ix. 32.

⁶ Matt. xxi. 42.

⁷ Rom. xi. 11.

⁸ 1 Tim. vi. 5.

designed to be done away in Christ, when he offered up himself on the cross once for all, and declared "it is finished;"¹ and all of them are to be fulfilled spiritually in the experience of his sincere followers. The candid reader will not, it is hoped, misinterpret this general remark, as implying a disregard of the volume of inspiration, the regular observance of a day of public devotion, the ministry of the gospel, and other outward necessary circumstances of divine worship; since all these must be recognised and valued by every intelligent and conscientious Christian.

Large, and of vast importance, is the subject here briefly touched on. The general view, which has been taken of the distinguishing characters of the two dispensations, leads to this conclusion—that the outward presence and government of God, vouchsafed anciently to the Israelites, clearly point by analogy to the spiritual dominion of Christ, over "the chosen generation, royal priesthood, holy nation, and peculiar people,"² whom God secretly acknowledges in this gospel day, as his true universal church, wherever scattered among the various churches and kingdoms of the world. These, however regarded or disregarded by man, are still the one living church or body, of which Christ is the glorified Head.

There appears, therefore, to be no valid plea for a union of secular and religious influence among professing Christians, on the ground of such an union having existed in the extraordinary case of the ancient Israelites; the two covenants being widely different, and the authority by which the church of Christ is regulated and governed being manifested, in a direct and heart-reaching manner, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

An application of the same key will, it is believed, be found sufficient to unlock other difficulties and objections, arising from a literal acceptation and copying of the Old Testament; and will furnish an answer to other arguments, in favour of the union of civil and spiritual authority, which it is the object of this treatise to controvert.

Thus the ancient prophets, foreseeing future times, and kindling with a sense of the glories of the Christian church, describe it in bold figurative terms, as endowed by the Most High with

¹ John xix. 30.

² 1 Peter ii. 9.

all the greatness, honour, and sovereignty of the world. "They shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders; and kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers; they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet,"¹ &c. None can doubt that these predictions have been or will be fulfilled; but the great question still remains: how are they to be understood? Are they to be taken literally, as denoting that true Christians, or those who in spirit and temper of mind are lowly, meek, poor, hungry, thirsty, and contrite, are to be carried in triumph in the arms and on the shoulders of the people, nursed and caressed by their kings and queens? &c. What then would become of the humility of the professed followers of Christ? With respect to both princes and subjects, the predictions are to be fulfilled spiritually.

But we find the same things, and still greater, predicted with respect to himself; and a consideration of these, and of their mode of fulfilment, may assist us in determining the real meaning of such expressions as the foregoing. The Psalmist says, "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth; they that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust; the kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents, the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him, and all nations shall serve him."² And how have these prophecies been verified? Not in an outward literal sense, with secular authority, honour and glory; but doubtless already fulfilled in part, and to be still more so, spiritually but completely. He did not choose outward pomp and triumph, though spiritually Lord of lords and King of kings, but "took upon him the form of a servant." And thus will it be in some degree with his followers. As such, they will disclaim outward superiority and mastery, in compliance with his commands: "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant; whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."³ "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your

¹ Isaiah xlix. 22, 23. ² Psalm lxxii. 8—11. ³ Matt. xxiii. 11, 12.

minister, and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”¹ “It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his Lord.”²

The more carefully we weigh the character of ancient prophecy, with respect both to Christ and to his church, and examine the mode in which it is to be understood and fulfilled; the more clearly we shall perceive that it would be a gross misapplication of those sublime predictions, to interpret them as foretelling worldly riches, power, and grandeur, to be the portion of the true, faithful, lowly, long-suffering Church of Christ. The two principles are in their general natures and tendencies diametrically opposite; “For God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things which are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.”³ And this, generally speaking, will ever remain to be true, although the pride, and rebellion, and self-love of the human heart may plead to the contrary.

¹ Matt. xx. 25—28.

² Matt. x. 25.

³ 1 Cor. i. 27.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE EVILS RESULTING FROM THE POSSESSION OF WORLDLY POWER BY THE PROFESSED MINISTERS OF CHRIST, AND ON THE DUTY OF ASPIRING AT A PURE GOSPEL STANDARD.

THE views traced in the preceding pages lead to the conclusion, that systems of ecclesiastical polity, introduced and established by human wisdom and authority, have for the most part but little connexion with the upholding of the true church and kingdom of Christ. The craving after power, which originates these systems, and which they tend to gratify, is a disposition of unregenerate nature, utterly opposed to christian simplicity and lowliness. Its dependence is on "the arm of flesh"¹ and not upon the Lord.

The author has no desire to judge uncharitably. He is dealing, not with individuals, but with principles, and with the effects which those principles are calculated to produce. If the system is one which holds out to the ministry large pecuniary premiums, or an ascending scale of honours and preferments, stately palaces, and handsome equipages; if it sets a high value on mere talent and learning, and on connexions with the great and powerful of the earth; if the controvertist, the sophist, and the politician are rewarded with superior dignities and prominent seats; it will not be surprising that ambition and worldly-mindedness should obtain the ascendency, and mainly influence the movements; till at length the humility and self-denial, the forbearance and charity, which are essential features of the kingdom and servants of the meek and lowly Jesus, are gradually lost or greatly diminished.

A strong temptation is thus held out to the corrupt heart of man, to enter the holy vocation of the ministry from motives of pecuniary interest, vain ambition, and worldly aggrandisement. As some men enter the army or the navy, in order to obtain a

¹ 2 Chron. xxxii. 8.

46 WORLDLY MOTIVES FOR UNDERTAKING THE MINISTRY. [*Chap. 8.*

living and advancement in the world ; so it is to be feared that others are induced to undertake this sacred work, with motives very little if at all more elevated.

In many large patrician families, the eldest son is educated for the legal profession, that he may be qualified to act with reputation as a country gentleman and magistrate ; a second of resolute character is introduced to the army ; a third to the navy ; and a fourth, selected perhaps as the most dull, grave, or timid, is brought up, apparently on the same principles, and with somewhat similar motives, as a minister of religion. How lamentable is the mistake, which gives opportunity for individuals to be thrust into this sacred office, with such motives, but professing themselves called to it by the Holy Ghost ; of whose baptizing, sanctifying virtue on their own hearts, they may have known little or nothing ; and if so, they are utter strangers to the true call to labour for the spiritual good of others, and incompetent to lead them by faith to self-denial and holiness. Does not such a course tend to blind the spiritual eye to the true nature and sacred character of the ministry of the gospel ; to cause it to be regarded as on a level with outward sciences and learned professions, and chiefly as a means of advancement in the world ; to encourage hardness of heart, presumption, hypocrisy ; and, in fact, to turn light into darkness, and to minister to mammon rather than to God ? A strong and truly painful inference !

But although such is the dangerous tendency, it does not follow that in all instances it is the actual result. There is, it must be gratefully acknowledged, a holy leavening influence in divine things ; and if the mind, though it may have been much of a stranger thereto, be open to receive that heavenly influence, it may, and in many instances it will, be enlightened, humbled, warmed, and purified. Yet, how awful is the consideration, that the profession of a divinely-inspired call is too often little better than a lie in the mouth, a fearful mockery of divine omniscience ! From such a commencement, what ground is there to expect good results in future ? Serious and awful are the consequences, which a wrong entrance on an undertaking so sacred is calculated to produce. Humility and poverty of spirit are in danger of being overlooked or despised. High pretensions and worldly superiority find a ready acceptance.

Impatience, and severity towards those who conscientiously differ, are naturally induced. The watchfulness and fear of the Christian are little regarded and inculcated; while charity and truth too rarely regulate the heart, and govern the conduct. The religious growth and experience of the minister are likely to be behind those of many of the people. It may be better to leave the subject to the serious reflections of the reader, than to enter further on painful results, too often exemplified in practice!

"The ambitious seeking of dignities and prelacies ecclesiastical," said Bishop Taylor, "is grown the pest of the church: it corrupts the salt itself, extinguishes the light, and gives too apparent evidence to the world, that neither the end is pure, nor the intention sanctified, nor the person innocent."¹

Bishop Jebb made this candid acknowledgment: "The dignities, titles and emoluments of our establishments obviously constitute as severe a test of virtue, as the mind can well be tried by; and it must be admitted that these objects minister fuel to the bad passions of thousands."

But, alas, for the poor sheep and lambs of the fold in such cases! Instead of being fed in the green pastures of life, how are they, in many instances, driven out upon the barren and desolate mountains of an empty and a lifeless profession! Instead of being gathered by the crook of divine love, through a true gospel ministry, into the fold of Christ, how scattered and neglected in the midst of the allurements and dangers of the world! Not brought to the brook of living water, or to that well which springs up into everlasting life; but encouraged to drink of muddy and polluted streams, producing no salutary effects, but tending rather to disease and death! Thus may the prophet's complaint of the pastors of old be renewed:—"Woe be to the shepherds of Israel; that feed themselves, but feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them,"² &c.

¹ Life of Christ.

² Ezekiel xxxiv. 2—4.

Can it be supposed that, under such circumstances, figuratively speaking, the seed of the kingdom is really sown, that the church will be built up a spiritual house, that the word of truth will be rightly divided, that the milk of the word and the wine of the kingdom will be administered in purity, and that the union and communion of the soul with the Father of Spirits can be truly promoted ?

So far from the real spiritual nature of the gospel dispensation being understood, and its advancement promoted by such ministers; and instead of the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ, wherein He may reign with undisputed sway ; perhaps it is not uncharitable to conclude that, even in the professing Christian churches, the great enemy of man's happiness, the prince of darkness and of death, though often unperceived, retains a large share of authority in high places, and successfully spreads his fatal snares and poisoning influence around !

An idea seems to prevail in some Christian communities that ministers of the gospel ought, by virtue of their office, to possess the whole ecclesiastical authority, and that they alone have the "power of the keys" to bind and to loose spiritually. Yet if the variety of the several gifts and callings in the church be properly considered, with reference to that divine Source, from which all that are really useful and edifying must proceed, it will be found that the various living members stand, in some degree, on equal ground, like the members of the body ; all contributing their respective shares, and exercising their separate functions, for the good of the whole ; unable to subsist in health without one another, but advantageous and necessary each to each.

That a qualification for the ministry and a call to it should confer the authority to rule over the church, is a notion utterly opposed to the precepts and examples of Christ and his apostles. The very term of minister conveys an idea of service, not of superiority ; and such are in danger of being unfitted for their peculiar spiritual avocation, by undertaking disciplinary control, and by an attempt to govern. All are not called to the ministry, but all are called to perform some spiritual duty, and equally called to holiness and dedication of heart. Those

who labour faithfully in their particular callings, whether the care of the poor, the discipline of the church, the exercise of judgment, the reproof of the unruly, the dealing with offenders, the encouragement of the weak, or other services, may be equally endued with discernment, equally useful in their respective duties, and equally capable of administering the general affairs of the church.

To put such a duty on ministers alone is, as Dr. Arnold and others have well observed, to take them out of their proper service, or to disqualify them for it; to sanction the unevangelical distinction between "clergy and laity;" and to perpetuate ecclesiastical usurpation under a new and objectionable form. It is contrary to the example of the apostolic age, when the twelve apostles declined to "leave the word of God and serve tables;"¹ declaring that they would give themselves "continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word;" while the management and administration of the more secular affairs of the church were committed to seven others, being "men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost, and wisdom." Though the calling of the apostles was to a different service, yet in what degree could they surpass this general character of Christian excellence? Surely God hath set the several spiritual members in the body as it hath pleased him; and the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of thee," nor again, the head to the feet, "I have no need of you,"² but all are useful, and in some respect equal. For "he that is greatest among you," said our Lord, "shall be your servant, and whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased."³

A striking instance of the evils resulting from the body at large having no voice in its own affairs, is afforded by the Anglican church; where the neglect of general moral discipline, the toleration of acknowledged and long continued abuses, and the hopelessness of any remedy under the present system, plainly show the injurious consequences of leaving the management too much to the ministers of the church, or rather to the parliament, and not entrusting the members generally with a share of control and responsibility. This deficiency is ill supplied by the exercise of secular power by the state, in an unnatural and anomalous union.

¹ Acts vi.

² 1 Cor. xii. 21.

Matt. xxiii. 11, 12.

With great inconsistency, while ministers of religion or professed priests are forbidden by canon law, and deem it derogatory to their spiritual vocation, to engage in secular affairs, they do not hesitate to degrade that very vocation into a secular possession, and to avail themselves of the power of the state to enforce their authority. The converse of these principles will be deemed by many to be more consistent with primitive Christianity.

Some of the earliest of those who complained against ecclesiastical corruptions were the Donatists, in the East, a large, influential and zealous body of Christians, who inveighed boldly, for several centuries, against the temporal character, which, at that early period, disfigured and weakened the church. To the ambassadors of the Emperor Constans, who, in 348, attempted to restore them to the Catholic church, they replied, "What has the emperor to do with the church?" A reasonable inquiry, which has received no attention. Another of their questions was, "What have Christians to do with kings, or bishops with the court?"—"The bad spirit which opposes the churches," they said, "is become a much more dangerous enemy in these covert attempts,"—referring to the bribes which were offered them by the agent. "Those, who by humbling themselves, might regain the grace of God, he endeavours to make secure, flattering them that they may still be Christians and even bishops, whilst he entices them with princely favours and earthly gifts." Against the arrogance of the professed apostolic sees, they appealed, in support of their own church, to those passages of scripture, where "the little flock of true confessors is distinguished from the great mass of the faithless, or those who belong only in appearance to the kingdom of God."¹

Most of the Lollards, Puritans and Reformers protested, age after age, against the wealth and secular jurisdiction of the church, and urged its reduction to a state of primitive humility and simplicity. The want of this was the great burthen which oppressed their consciences.

In proportion as we duly estimate the unspeakable benefits to mankind, arising from the religion of Christ, and from the establishment of his kingdom upon earth, we must desire, if we would fully realise its blessings, that that kingdom may be

¹ Neander's Hist. of Church.

upheld in its simple purity ; that Christ may indeed reign in our hearts and in the world, and that the happy consequences of his government may be experienced and diffused, without curtailment and without adulteration. But it is a frequent and general error, through the prevalence of self-love, to shrink from suffering, and therefore to deceive ourselves with the idea, as individuals and as churches, that there is an easier and better road to happiness, a shorter and a less thorny path, than that of faith and of the cross, than the strait gate and the narrow way.

Human policy and expediency plead strongly that divine things and services must be dignified, and made respectable in the eyes of the world, that appendages of outward honour and enjoyment serve as auxiliaries to the cause of religion, as attractions to devotion. But is not this reasoning practically fallacious ? These specious appendages have a lowering influence, and are liable to be mistaken for the thing itself, the professed auxiliaries gradually tending to supplant the genuine truth. Christianity, powerful in its simplicity, and great in the midst of its humiliation, needs them not. Our Lord himself was born in a stable ; his parents and associates were persons of low degree in the estimation of man. He required no aid from human power and glory, nor did he commit his cause to such means, for its introduction and promulgation in the world. As the stone which became a mountain and filled the earth,¹ was cut out without hands ; as the first temple and the altars of the Lord were raised without the sound of the workman's tool,² and as God chose, in the beginning of the Christian church, "the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak to confound the mighty, and base things, and things which are despised, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are ;"³ so even now, Christ's spiritual building is to be erected and maintained, not by creaturely devices, but by faith in his all-powerful word, and by simple obedience to his revealed will. For it remains to be an eternal truth, that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."⁴ If we would attempt to erect the spiritual house, to establish the heavenly kingdom, by human

¹ Dan. ii. 35.

² 1 Kings vi. 7 ; Exodus xx. 35 ; Joshua viii. 31.

³ 1 Cor. i. 27, 28.

⁴ 1 Cor. i. 25.

contrivance, with worldly policy, and by seeking to build on the one true foundation with "gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;"¹ we shall find in the end that we have attempted an impossibility, and that these are vain materials and corrupt elements to rely on, for promoting the glory of God, or the spiritual good of his creatures. Our building will be the very opposite to "the sanctuary and the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man."²

Many churches, through an outward zeal, have adopted the error of connecting the Christian religion with the gratification of the senses, by an excitement, enthusiasm and ecstacy, which are utterly powerless in producing genuine devotion, in raising the moral, healthy tone of the mind, or in qualifying it to fulfil the duties and grapple with the temptations of life. Christianity is not a religion of imagination or of sensual enjoyment. It is founded upon humble faith and rational conviction, which shed a calm but decisive influence over the mind and the conduct. It is the conversion and renovation of the heart through the power of the Holy Spirit, the sins being blotted out through faith in the Saviour of men.

In the New Testament the nature of Christ's kingdom is clearly revealed to us. In that kingdom, as has been before observed, his Spirit will ever bear rule, and be the actuating influence; not in profession and words alone, but in deed and in truth. The fruits of the Spirit will be clearly manifested; and such, the Apostle Paul tells us, are these,—" love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."³ In proportion therefore as these are produced and prevail, through the working of the Holy Spirit, in the same degree is the kingdom of Christ exalted and bearing rule, whether in an individual or in a church. And must it not also be acknowledged, that professing Christians, and those termed Christian churches, generally fall far short of the gospel standard?

It is, however, well to remember that in this state of imperfection and mixture, man is a very inadequate judge of the amount of good or evil in those around him; and well is it that their final judgment will not rest with him. In those whom he

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 12.

² Heb. viii. 2.

³ Gal. v. 22.

esteems good, there may be external propriety, but inward unsoundness; regard to man's estimation, and not singleness of love to God, may be the pervading motive; much of the corrupt nature may yet remain; the will and lusts may be but partially subdued; the spiritual enemies may still be potent. While, on the other hand, in those accounted the worldly-minded and the wicked, there may still be some desires after good, some redeeming qualities; they may have been surrounded with greater temptations, and may have struggled with more difficulties than others. There may be, in fact, less difference between the two classes than we imagine. The one we are assured has cause for deep humiliation and watchfulness; the other may have some ground for hope and encouragement.

Yet the sense of human imperfection must not be permitted to furnish an excuse for our own self-love and self-satisfaction, to make us content with our low attainments, and to prevent us from attempting to make a close approximation to the high standard of truth and perfection. This is a dangerous idea, and one which has been a fertile and fatal source of error, degeneracy and evil. While we are painfully sensible that man is in a fallen state by nature, we are bound thankfully to remember that Christ came to raise him up out of the fall, and to redeem him from its consequences. It is essential to the Christian to keep his eye fixed on the standard, and according to the light and grace vouchsafed, to wage perpetual war with everything that a quickened conscience convinces him is at variance with it. "Faint yet pursuing"¹ must be his motto. What was the language of the apostle of old? "Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before, I press toward the mark."² Such also, undoubtedly, must be the language of every professing church or community. The standard of truth and righteousness must ever be kept in view; the mark set up in the gospel must be steadily aimed at; errors, inconsistencies, blemishes, and hindering things must be faithfully acknowledged, watched against and taken away.

The removal of one evil opens the way for the removal of others. The spiritual vision becomes cleared by simple obedience: the eye that is kept single "will be full of light."³ "He that doeth the will of God shall know of the doctrine"⁴

¹ Judges viii. 4. ² Phil. iii. 13. ³ Matt. vi. 22. ⁴ John vii. 17.

of Christ. Other truths are made manifest, as the first have been embraced in sincerity. But if there is a turning from the light, a clinging to error, a perseverance in evil after it has been clearly discovered, the vision becomes clouded, the path of truth and duty is questioned and doubted, other roads open before us, and we find ourselves more and more involved in a labyrinth of confusion, danger and darkness.

Delusive is the idea, which tempts us to be satisfied with endeavouring to remain stationary in our Christian course. The spiritual traveller who does so will never arrive at the desired termination of his journey. If he desist from the pursuit of truth, he is in great danger of being drawn into error. Every retrograde step in the narrow way brings him nearer to its broad antipodes, and renders his return more difficult. It is so with individuals, and it is equally so with churches. The tree which is stunted, and makes no progress, will hasten to decay. While, therefore, life remains, let the pruning-knife be applied to the cankers, and the branches be purged; let the ungenial soil be removed, and the pestiferous blast averted. But if we plead, on the contrary, that these are common evils, long-standing defects; that it is dangerous to meddle, lest we make bad worse; and that we must not expect perfection, or good, without some alloy; fearful is our standing, dangerous our temptation; and, without a great change, awful must be the final result.

What then is our obvious duty, whether as private persons or as religious communities? We must in all sincerity seek for heavenly wisdom to enable us to cease from evil; we must narrowly inspect our motives, abstain from self-indulgence, relinquish and put away errors, disregarding apprehended consequences. And, on the other hand, in the exercise of faith in Christ, the head of the church, we must implore divine help and guidance, simply embrace the good, act out our principles, pursue the path of truth and righteousness; and, ever remembering that we are weak and foolish, we must keep the eye singly directed to him who is both wisdom and strength; that thus our whole body may "be full of light, having no part dark;"¹ our path, notwithstanding much cause of mourning and repentance, becoming that of the righteous, and "shining more and more unto the perfect day."²

¹ Luke xi. 36.

² Proverbs iv. 18.

It is with a view to this blessed result, that the writer of these pages ventures, in all humility, honesty, and good will, and under a sense of great imperfection, to throw before his fellow-countrymen a view of some of the evils, which appear to him most obvious, and most necessary to be corrected, in the politico-religious systems of professed Christian churches; in order to purge them from their political character, and to promote a higher degree of conformity with the gospel standard, of freedom, spirituality, truth and holiness.

Dr. Arnold, after urging the necessity of aiming at a pure spiritual standard, proceeds thus:—"The ordinary answer to all this consists in mere random charges of enthusiasm and impracticability,—such doctrines sound well in theory, but will not do in practice. But to what is it that all the improvements in the world are to be ascribed, but to these high and aspiring principles? To what is every corruption, every folly, every existing wickedness imputable, but to the low notions of those who call themselves practical, and who, forming their models from their own practice, and that of others like them, excuse the perpetual grovellings of themselves and of all who listen to them, in the degradation of their actual vileness? That blessed gospel which these practical men profess to reverence, is full of what they must consider the wildest theories: and the heights to which it strives to raise us, and from which we are ever shrinking backwards, are indeed unattainable by those who love to think them so. But read the prophets, read the apostles, and say if there is any limit to that perfection in virtue and happiness, which they call upon the church of God to thirst after."¹

¹ Fragment on the Church.

CHAPTER IX.

THE UNION OF CIVIL AND PROFESSEDLY SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY,
WHETHER THROUGH THE USURPATION OF SECULAR POWER BY
ECCLESIASTICS, OR THROUGH THE INTERFERENCE OF THE STATE
IN SPIRITUAL MATTERS, THE GREAT CAUSE OF PERSECUTIONS.

"NEBUCHADNEZZAR the king made an image of gold, and set it up in the plain of Dura. Then a herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, oh people, nations and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of all kinds of music, ye fall down, and worship the golden image that the king has set up ; and whoso falleth not down, and worshippeth, shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning, fiery furnace."¹

This procedure affords a memorable illustration of the abuse of the power of the state, in order to enforce religious conformity ; and it may be taken as a type of all the despotic measures, and violent persecutions on the ground of religion, by Heathen, Jewish and professedly Christian rulers, from that time to the present. Though modern refinement no longer permits the victims to be cast into a fiery furnace, or to be cut in pieces, and their houses to be made a dunghill, yet it cannot prevent the same spirit from occasionally effecting its purpose in a more secret and slow, but scarcely less vindictive manner ; others, however, are still found bowing down before the golden image. No sooner does secular power become placed at the will, and its arm exerted at the bidding of ecclesiastics, than it is used, to speak generally, as an engine of persecution, for the extirpation of differences of opinion, and for the enforcement of religious uniformity ; or, in its mildest form, as an instrument for the exaction of contributions, under the plea of upholding the truth. History, both sacred and profane, abounds with terrible examples of the exercise of this arbitrary interference ; and strongly confirms, by its experience, the arguments drawn

¹ Dan. iii.

from abstract principles, and from the doctrines of Scripture, against the entrusting of any Christian church, as such, with civil authority. However excellent may be the faith and practice of a church, the possession of this authority has been proved to be the most likely means to destroy its real excellence, and to subvert its spiritual character. A temptation is thus presented, to employ positive evil in the promotion of apprehended good—a course which has operated in all ages most injuriously to the cause of true religion.

There are two great forms of this bondage of Antichrist, remarks a modern writer¹—the church absorbing the state, and violently preventing men from worshipping according to their consciences, as in the papacy—and a state absorbing the church, as in almost every state and church establishment, and compelling men to acts of religious profession and worship, when conscience tells them it is all hypocrisy.

Who, on the one hand, may recount the fines, imprisonments, banishments, tortures, hangings, and burnings, which men in power, while professing to be Christians, have inflicted on their fellow-men, under grossly erroneous views of the nature of that authority, and of those weapons which Christ committed to his followers! To relate these enormities in detail, would be to transcribe a large portion of ecclesiastical history, and to shock the common sensibilities of our nature. Truly may it be said of the Antchristian church, under every name. “In her skirts was found the blood of the poor innocents;” and “the blood of prophets, and of saints, that were slain upon the earth.”²

And who, on the other hand, may describe to the full the hypocrisy, the time-serving, the ambition, the avarice, the quenchings of the Spirit, the stiflings of conscience, and all their evil results to the cause of vital religion, and to the spread of the gospel and kingdom of Christ, which have been fostered by secular interference in divine things, with threats on the one side and rewards on the other.

If a church is a true one, it requires not the aid of human might and coercion to maintain and extend it; but if it is a false one, that aid will be a still more deadly instrument in its hand. Each church believes its own principles to be right and

¹ Dr. Cheever's *Wanderings of a Pilgrim.* ² Jer. ii. 34; Rev. xviii. 24.

true, and hence arises a natural and laudable desire that they may be embraced by others. At the same time no means must be employed, for the propagation even of that which is believed to be the truth, except those persuasive appeals to the teachings of the Holy Spirit, to the testimony of Scripture, and to the evidences of right reason, which are suited to intelligent and self-responsible beings. Christian humility and charity should cause us ever to bear in mind that we are all fallible : that others may be as nearly right as ourselves, and even more so ; that it is not our prerogative to determine for them ; and that the great omniscient Judge, not short-sighted, erring man, will ultimately decide on each of us.

To believe that none will be approved and saved, but those of our own particular creed, is an unworthy, unscriptural view of the comprehensive nature of redeeming love, and of real Christianity ; wanting nothing but the power, to bring with it constraint and persecution. It is likewise remarkable, but generally true, that correction and punishment have been applied much less vehemently by ecclesiastics to suppress flagrant moral evil, and absolute criminality, than to extirpate differences in matters of faith, under the terms of heresy and schism ; and that the less important those differences really are, the more fiercely is bigoted zeal bent on their eradication, and the less is the excuse admitted for dissentients. In such cases, where conformity is enforced, the violence done to the free moral agency of the mind is the more revolting to its feelings, and excites the stronger opposition. Free inquiry and reasonable obedience, says one, are alone worthy of God's acceptance ; he spurns the constrained homage of slaves !

With respect to religious differences, it may be pleaded that they are proofs of zeal, sincerity, and attachment to truth. Would it be advantageous to the mind and character of man to put them all down ? Would not a spiritual concealment, indolence and apathy be more to be dreaded ? The healthful breeze, the antagonistic muscle, the obstinate rock, the variety of material forms, are all useful in the economy of nature, as their counterparts are in the intellectual and spiritual world. Generous rivalry in attempts to do good, and to advance ourselves and mankind, will be a noble substitute for mutual recrimination and persecution, as well as far more worthy of the zeal and

energy of Christians. The variations of Protestant churches, which Papists, silent on their own internal dissensions, delight to recount and to magnify, will, when viewed in this light, produce no evil; but rather serve as stimulants in the great practical work of spiritual and social philanthropy, in other words, of true christianity. But if we condemn and excommunicate each other, we become a more easy prey to evil.

"Universal charity," said William Penn, "the assertion of impartial liberty of conscience, and the doing to others as one would be done by, are corner stones and principles with me; and I am scandalized at all buildings that have them not for their foundations. For religion itself is an empty name without them. Let us not flatter ourselves; we can never be the better for our religion, if our neighbour is the worse for it. We are apt to be mighty hot upon speculative errors, and break all bounds in our resentment; but we let practical errors pass without rebuke, if not without attention."¹

When Queen Elizabeth commanded Archbishop Grindal to put down the Puritan "prophesying," he became distressed in conscience, and felt obliged to disobey her orders, urging that it was a great blessing to have plenty of labourers sent into the harvest. Thus he requests, "that when your Majesty deals in matters of faith and religion, you would not pronounce so peremptorily as you may do in civil matters; but remember that in God's cause, his will, and not the will of any earthly creature, is to take place. It is the anti-christian voice of the Pope,— 'Sic volo, sic jubeo, stet pro ratione voluntas.'"² He puts her in mind that, though she was a great princess, she was yet a mortal creature. The enraged queen, however, was not to be influenced by such Christian reasoning, but exercised her prerogative as head of the church, and by an order from the Star Chamber, without consulting the clergy, sent the primate to his house, sequestering him from his functions for several years.³

Religious persecution in all ages has pleaded, and even persuaded itself to believe, that its object was the honour of God and the welfare of man; as the Saviour foretold, "Whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service."³ Temporal power is a dangerous instrument to be committed to the hands

¹ William Penn's letter to W. Popple.

² Neal's Puritans, vol. i.

³ John xvi. 2.

of ecclesiastics; and hence Christian ministers, however endued with grace, are wisely restrained by our Lord from assuming it. "It shall not be so among you, but whosoever of you will be the chiefest shall be servant of all."¹ Under whatever terms, therefore, it may be pleaded for, whether of church and state, or of the dominion of grace, the principle is contrary to the law of Christ, whose ministers must use only the weapons which he provides; and these are "not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of the strongholds" of error and sin, in the service and warfare of Him whose kingdom is not of this world. The upholding of civil laws, and the punishment of crime with outward means, must be left to the civil magistrates, "for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing."²

Respecting the employment of force, as a means of conversion, the Donatist Petilian says, "Do you think to serve God, when you murder us with your own hands? You err, you err, if you think so. God has no hangmen for his priests! Christ, when he died for men, gave us an example of dying, not of killing." And Gaudentius, another of them, remarks, "God has made man free after his own image. How is that which God has given taken away by human arrogance! What sacrilege! that man should take away what God has given, and then vainly boast that this is done for God! What does he think of God, who wishes to defend him by force? That God cannot revenge his own injuries? The Lord says, 'My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth.' The world's peace may be established by force; the peace of Christ invites men with healing mildness."³

"Two things there be," says Milton, in his treatise on the civil power, "which have ever wrought much mischief to the church of God, and to the cause of truth—force on one side restraining, and hire on the other side corrupting the teachers."

"The same spirit of wrath and bitterness, which in the form of popery burnt the protestants in Queen Mary's days, soon after crept into a better form, and hunted down the puritans in those of Queen Elizabeth. And when Presbytery got into the chair of authority, the same evil genius, dressed in a new cloak of reformation, forged the fetters of a new uniformity,

¹ Mark x. 43, 44.

² Romans xiii. 6.

³ Neander's History.

and laid the axe to the root of episcopacy. Independency promised better things, and pleaded strongly for liberty of conscience and universal toleration ; and yet when Independents, driven by the rigours of church government out of Old England, got footing and power in the new world, they forgot their sufferings and their principles, and then persecuted the Quakers. But these last, though we have seen them with government in their hands, were never known to persecute or molest any for conscience' sake.”¹

On the one hand, as if to show the folly of the union of church and state, by strange contrast and in full force, the highest Christian ruler of the Greek church is appointed by a *Mahomedan* prince. This affords a striking example of the corrupting influence of court authority in ecclesiastical affairs ; the appointment being generally bestowed by the Sultan on such an individual, as he expects will either give him the largest pecuniary present, or will prove best suited to his own personal objects. On the other hand, the Church of Rome is an example not less fearful of the evils arising from the authority of a bishop exercising temporal power ; under which, bigotry and usurpation “grind the faces of the poor,” and oppress the springs of enlightened sentiment and action in both civil and religious matters.

The forced amalgamation of the Lutheran and Calvinistic churches by the King of Prussia, and the creation of a new, united evangelical church, about the year 1830, appears to have been a gratuitous, ill-advised measure of irresponsible authority ; the more offensive, because the work of a Protestant prince, and in opposition to the prevailing feelings of the people. The lamentable effect has been to drive many into popery, and many into infidelity ; while others, who maintained their principles, were compelled to quit their native land. No new sect or mode of religion is allowed to be instituted in Prussia, without the special permission of the Sovereign. Such is the thralldom of the conscience in the nineteenth century, and in a protestant country !

The history of Geneva also affords evident proof that, under various professions, the state and the church united are intolerant. The state oppresses the church,—the church, in her turn,

¹ Preface to Hartley's Sermons, 1755.

tempted by the state; oppresses those who differ from her; and so the work goes on. The demonstration is such that no man can resist its power. Inoculate the church, so to speak, with the state, and the same plague invariably follows. No constitution is proof against the virus. The union is adulterous, the progeny evil. To what European nation will not these remarks in some degree apply ?¹

Many have been the attempts made at different periods on the continent of Europe, to throw off the yoke of priestly domination. Even under corrupt forms of religion, the struggle may be said to have been continual, between the spirit of darkness and usurpation on the one side, and that of religious light and liberty on the other. The recent efforts to establish a German Catholic Church and an Italian Catholic Church, though mixed with many superstitious notions, and almost crushed for the time, are to be hailed as indications of an important movement among the Romanists themselves, against hierarchical despotism; and as consequences of the educational advance of the age, sooner or later to produce intellectual and spiritual freedom !

"For three centuries," says one of the Italian reformers, "there has been a struggle for religious reform in Italy; which has occasioned the sacrifice of many noble victims, burned by the inquisition of Rome, drowned in the Lagoons of Venice, and hungered, poisoned or strangled in the prisons of Naples, of Tuscany, of Piedmont, and of Lombardy." In attempting to found a reformed Italian Church, about the year 1845, he declares, "We profess no other belief than what the Holy Scriptures distinctly and directly authorise, and we repudiate all that in later ages has been added by men. Our worship, therefore, goes back to the practice of primitive christianity, pure, simple and spiritual, adapted to the requirements and the devotion of the faithful, not bound by laws to any particular form, but varying according to the necessities of times, places, and persons."

The special objects of these movements were, to obtain for the people the power of choosing their own ministers, to abolish most of the mummary now practised in divine worship, to suppress the system of compulsory payments for religious

¹ Laing's Notes of a Traveller.

services ; and, above all, to reduce the power of the priests, and to establish a new church unconnected with the Pope and the state. Consultations between the Catholics, with a view to the same objects, have of late years been held in the United States of America ; and it is not probable that Rome will long be permitted to retain any important influence over the independent people of that country.

There is certainly some truth in the remark, that, where the civil and ecclesiastical power are divided, and vested in separate hands, although both may at times be despotic, they have a tendency to check and counteract each other, and when this effect is produced, to foster a spirit of mutual independence. The worst form of spiritual tyranny is found, where the priestly hand commands also the sceptre of state ; there, in most cases, woe to the assertors of either civil or religious rights !

“ Sire,” said Beza to the King of Navarre, “ it belongs to the church of God to suffer blows, not to strike them. But at the same time, let it be your pleasure to remember that the church is an anvil that has worn out many a hammer.”¹ This is a true saying ; but if the anvil itself be ever used as a hammer, the effects are terrific !

Sir James Mackintosh observes that the fanatical zeal, even of some protestants, has regarded other protestants, and popery in an especial manner, as offences against God, which it was a Christian duty to extirpate ; while papists, on the other hand, have very generally viewed what they called heresy in the same light. Thus one half of the Christian world imagined itself bound in conscience to destroy the other, for the honour of God ! This is a dark but too true a picture, and a lamentable contrast to the pattern of Christ !

The interference of the power of a state in the religious concerns of its subjects, is proved by all history, ancient and modern, to be so adverse to the existence of civil and religious liberty, that it may be called the right arm of despotism. And further, if the moral and religious influence of the established clergy over the people be examined in protestant countries, it will be found to be generally diminished in proportion to the extent of that interference.

“ Religious liberty,” says a shrewd American, “ has never

¹ Smedley’s History of the French Reformation.

yet been fully understood in Europe. Until it is complete, things will never be settled. The muddy fermentation is just working itself clear, but it makes a great disturbance in doing so. The nations have never yet been ready for it. The old bottles would not hold this wine of the new dispensation ; but God is preparing the world for it. It is with the great error—church and state, as with many minor practical errors that have long prevailed ; they must be undermined gradually, and the occupants above warned off the ground. The great reformation of the nineteenth century will be, in the opinion of many eminent men, the mutual independence of the state and the church. Then, and not before, will the great voice be heard, ‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen !’ ”¹

¹ Cheever’s Wanderings of a Pilgrim. Rev. xviii. 2.

CHAPTER X.

THE CORRUPTION OF RELIGION PROMOTED BY THE USE OF CERTAIN UNSCRIPTURAL TERMS AND EXPRESSIONS, AND BY THE MISAPPLICATION OF OTHERS.

IN wading through the details of the vast ignorance and superstition displayed in the pages of ecclesiastical history, interesting as they are in many respects, the reader cannot fail to be impressed with the conviction, that, like an overwhelming flood, those evils laid waste at an early period the fair field of Christian truth; and converted it, for the most part, into a melancholy swamp of error and corruption. Both Jewish and heathen notions, and practices of an outward, degrading tendency, pervaded the church, deformed its spiritual character, and showed themselves at every turn, in the ideas, in the institutions, and therefore in the language, of Christians. The evil was largely insinuated and made permanent, by the invention of new terms and by the misapplication of others, suited either to a former dispensation, or to low and false views of great gospel principles. The pure, practical, devout character of the Christian had been lost in that of the ignorant, visionary bigot. The humble, disinterested, pious minister was transformed into the proud, grasping, superficial ecclesiastic. Spiritual truths were supplanted by fables; and the daily moral and religious duties of Christians had degenerated, either into a round of empty and ridiculous absurdities, or into unjust, superstitious alienations of property for the use of the pretended church. Along with such debased circumstances and notions, a set of corresponding corrupt terms had grown up to indicate them, which tended greatly to foster the evil; and it became evident that these terms required to be discarded or reformed, as well as the matters that gave rise to them, that there might be a return to

"the form of sound words"¹ denoting right principles—a work which the Reformation failed to accomplish.

Many of those enlightened, spiritually-minded men, who strove at various periods to stem the prevailing torrent of superstition, were strongly impressed with a sense of this necessity, and expressed it by words and by writings. It was therefore a sound and reasonable, though somewhat bold and startling attempt, on the part of George Fox and the other early Friends, about the middle of the seventeenth century, to reject some of those terms, and that customary application of others, which had originated in degenerate views of Christian truth; and to endeavour to establish a pure and simple vocabulary, free from such corruptions, and consistent with the plain and truthful language of our Lord and his apostles in the New Testament.

The dominion of vain custom or fashion in these and other more fluctuating matters, contrary to the plainness, simplicity and truthfulness of the gospel standard, is a burdensome yoke, oppressive to many single-hearted Christians of different professions. Would that they more faithfully followed Him, who declared that his yoke is easy and his burden light!

A very early innovation in support of ecclesiastical assumption, was the introduction, in a limited sense, of the term "*clergy*," which, being derived from a Greek word implying "*heritage*," is open to special objection in its present restricted application to certain bodies of ecclesiastics, in contradistinction to other ministers and to the people at large, called "*the laity*."² The word *clergy* properly applies to all the true church. The Levites, having tithes, instead of real estate, assigned them as a provision, were called "*God's lot, inheritance or clergy*."³ Yet some of the sacred writers in the Old Testament speak of all the nation as "*the lot of his inheritance*."⁴

In the New Testament, the whole Christian church is termed "*the heritage*," or *clergy*, "*of God*,"⁵ as distinguished from the world; and not merely one class in the church as distinguished from all the rest. When a Catholic priest receives the tonsure or shaving of the poll, as a rite of ordination, he repeats the words of the psalm, "*The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance*," &c.⁶

¹ 2 Tim. i. 13.

² See the Septuagint Readings.

³ Deut. xxxii. 9; Psalm xviii. 9.

⁴ 1 Peter v. 3. ⁵ Psalm xvi. 5.

According to the doctrine of the Romish Church, and of some high-church Protestants, "the clergyman" is endowed in his official character with spiritual powers, which elevate him far above "the layman." This idea tends to produce other practical notions and effects, opposed to the right appreciation of the common gospel privileges of believers, as "children and heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."¹

The designation of "*priests*," or sacrificers, originally meaning presbyters, is often used in the English prayer-book; but cannot, if truly considered, be applied solely to a class of men who have no divine authority distinctively to claim it; since on the one hand, it infers that all true Christians do not possess a right to the character; and on the other, it tends to derogate from the eternal priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ, our only Expiator and Mediator before the Father. How can they be acknowledged as *priests*, who have, according to our views, no sacrifices to offer for others, however they may encourage such an idea by their rites and terms? To encourage the use of such appellations, by adopting them, would seem to be affording a sanction to error, if not to idolatry. Hence follows the term "altar," and also the notion of frequent sacrifices; altogether opposed to the great plan of human redemption, by virtue of the offering of Jesus Christ "once for all," "without the gates of Jerusalem."

There is great reason to fear that the early adoption of the unscriptural term "*sacrament*" by the Christian church—a term which had been used by the Romans to signify a military oath or covenant—and the application of the word to certain religious rites and observances, tended in no small degree to produce a false estimate of the importance and character of those ceremonies, and to mislead the ignorant and simple-minded.

The word "*pontiff*," applied to the Popes of Rome, was derived from the old Roman title of pontifex, or chief priest of the idolatrous worship, and implies in its etymology the *maker of a bridge*, i.e., between heaven and earth, or a mediator,—an idea very inapplicable to the papal office!² Pontifex maximus,

¹ Rom. viii. 17, &c.

² It has been remarked, with great severity and some truth, that the title of *carnifex* more befitted some who have occupied the papal chair. The assumed term "*servus servorum*" seems to savour of irony.

the title of the heathen Cæsars, is still claimed as that of the Christian bishops of Rome! Gavazzi satirically observes that “the papacy is the ghost of the old Roman empire,” and that “it picked up in the dust of paganism the words ‘*Pontifex maximus*,’ a fragment of imperial pretensions, turning it to account with other shreds and patches of idolatry.”

Who can avoid admitting, on serious reflection, that the application of the term “*church*” to the buildings used by one denomination of Christians for divine worship, though it may be a common figure of speech, is liable to substantial objection; since it may tend to confuse the ignorant and unwary with superstitious, exclusive notions, and thus pervert the enlarged simple truth? If applied to the meeting-houses of all denominations, it would be objectionable; but yet more so is it when confined to those of one religious body, as though that body constituted exclusively the true church of Christ.

The word “*church*,” like “*clergy*,” is often misapplied in another way, by being limited to the body of ecclesiastics, in contradistinction to the members at large. This is especially the case in reference to property and authority, the possession and control of which, though spoken of as belonging to the church, are, in fact, often the sole enjoyment of its ministers and other officers. What definite meaning again is attached to the saying “*the church is in danger?*” Surely it is not that church which is founded on “*the Rock of Ages!*”

That Christians should have borrowed the names of heathen idols, and employed them for their own use, to designate the respective *months* and *days*, on which our benighted heathen ancestors worshipped those idols, is a strange inconsistency when fully considered; however it may be reconciled by long and general custom. The scriptural or numerical names are, not only on this account, but also in point of convenience and brevity, much to be preferred, and are therefore used in many public and mercantile offices. The Duhobortzi, a religious sect in Russia, act somewhat on this view, and give to the days of the week names conveying a religious meaning. Among intemperate artizans the profane phrase of *Saint-Monday* is not uncommon. In legal documents, the ancient terms are still used—“*dies solis*,” “*dies lunæ*,” &c. On the same ground, without any desire to be over-scrupulous and hypercritical, objections

arise to the words *Christmas*, and *Candlemas*, and *Michaelmas*, and *Lady-Day*, and *Whitsuntide*, &c., &c.; which are founded on observances and errors that most Protestants have long ago discarded. *Easter* was the name of an imaginary Anglo-Saxon goddess, whose festival occurred about the same period of the year as the Jewish passover, or the death and resurrection of Christ. The term ought not to have been retained.

Equally inconsistent is the superstitious prefix *Saint*, in the mouths of those who have renounced Romanism. What were the true characters of the pretended Saint George, and Saint Martin, and Saint Thomas à Beckett, and of hundreds of others? Even supposing that we have no evidence that the Romish saints were not good men, the serious question for each of us is,—Am I doing right in sanctioning, by frequent use, the canonization of the justly suspected personages of a false and an idolatrous superstition?

"Several of the ancient [pagan] heroes," says an eminent author, Dr. Conyers Middleton, "were more worthy of veneration than some of the modern [popish] saints, who have dispossessed them of their shrines; and I would rather pay divine honours to the founders of empires than to the founders of monasteries. I believe several of the popish saints to have been wholly fictitious, many more to have spent their lives contemptibly, and some of them even wickedly." The almost incredible number of 25,000 saints are said to be directly recognised by the Roman Catholic Church!¹ Well may Protestants protest against such a strange host of tutelary, wonder-working beings! The image of Peter in the Cathedral at Rome, which is still so highly venerated that its toe is absurdly kissed by superstitious thousands, is well known to be the very same statue that anciently represented the Pagan deity Jupiter Olympus! Is not this heathen worship still, under a slight change of form and name? Can it be that such superstitions shall ever receive countenance in England?

The adoration paid to the Virgin Mary at Rome far exceeds that which is paid to Christ, and is sometimes styled "The Marian idolatry." Where one prayer is offered to Christ, hundreds are said to be offered to "the queen of heaven!" "Santa Anna" is styled "the grandmother of God," and to her

¹ Eclectic Review, 1852.

too prayers are addressed for the remission of sins. How gross and awful are these idolatrous corruptions ; the perpetuation in fact of the imagined goddesses of heathen Rome ! And then the pretended venerable relics,—dead men's bones, decayed garments, rotten wood ; falsely characterised, blindly worshipped, palmed as true upon the ignorant and credulous ! May England beware how she encourages such base impositions !

Protestant writers on ecclesiastical history, in speaking of the eminent men often unsuitably termed Fathers in the early Christian church, generally omit the title of Saint given them by Roman Catholic authors. Thus Mosheim and Milner speak of Hilary, and Ambrose, and Augustin, &c., while Dupin gives them all the appellation of Saint. How plain and simple, on the contrary, is the language of the writers in the Old and New Testaments ! The word Saint introduced in some versions, before the names of the Evangelists at the head of the pages, is well known not to be authorised by the ancient manuscripts. If then its use, as a customary title of respect, is not sanctioned in reference to those holy men, who are acknowledged to have been truly saints, surely it is not justifiable in reference to their less holy, or even grossly degenerate successors.

Would not the same gospel simplicity, if faithfully acted upon, expunge the titles of "reverend," now claimed even by dissenters ; of "right-reverend father in God;" and all those designations of bishops, archbishops, &c., which indicate a spiritual position, far from being always attained by such ?¹

Other expressions which are open to serious objection, because false in reality and flattering in tendency, might be noticed ; but perhaps it may be said that our practice is of little consequence in most of these respects, since there is no danger of our returning to heathen customs. Yet a sanction should not be given to error. And there is still room for apprehension, with respect to a revival of Romish notions, and a renewed observance of saints' days, &c.

The Almighty declared of old by his prophets :—“ I will take away the names of Baalim out of his mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.”² “ Make no mention of

¹ The word “sir,” now applied to knights and baronets, was commonly prefixed to the name of preachers before the Reformation.

² Hosea ii. 17.

the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.”¹ “I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.”² Of Himself it is truly declared that “Holy and Reverend is His Name!”³

What can we say of such ascriptions as “his holiness,” “his worship,” “his reverence,” “his grace,” “his majesty!” Do they not trench on the divine prerogative? The profanation of names belonging to sacred objects or persons is at times strikingly apparent. Thus we find a vessel called “La Santa Trinidada,” or “La Santa Maria,” employed in the atrocious act of conveying the heathen children of Africa into hopeless slavery!

“Antichrist hath deceived us,” complained William Tyndal, “with unknown and strange terms, to bring us into confusion and superstitious blindness!”⁴ There is much truth in this complaint, and in the position that clear, appropriate, simple terms contribute largely to correct sentiments; while, on the other hand, indistinct and misapplied words and phrases tend to encourage and fortify error. If we would prevent this result, we must examine and remove, as far as may be, those accessories, which have so long contributed to forge its chains. Without desiring to lay unreasonable stress on points of this sort, the author commands the subject to the candid and serious consideration of his fellow-christians.

¹ Exodus xxiii. 13.

² Isaiah xlvi. 8.

³ Psalm cxi. 9.

⁴ Obedience of a Christian Man.

CHAPTER XI.

ON CHRISTIAN WORSHIP AND MINISTRY.

WHEN the Saviour of men condescended to converse with the woman of Samaria, and she had said to him, “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship,” he made this remarkable answer: “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit: and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.”¹ Several points are observable in this important passage. Our Lord twice declared that the Father must be worshipped in spirit and in truth; yet, unless the words are understood to have had a particular reference, they implied little more than had before been generally acknowledged. They must, therefore, be taken in connexion and contrast with what he had previously said; and consequently implying, not in that mountain ignorantly, nor in Jerusalem with knowledge; but without distinction of place, in spirit and in truth; not with external, ceremonial performances, as heretofore in both those places, nor with merely personal homage and service of the lips; but spiritually and truly, with heartfelt devotion, sincerity and earnestness. Again, he did not prescribe any particular rules or modes for the right performance of this sacred duty; but declared that God is a spirit, and that therefore devotion must be spiritual; the mind being truly and fervently occupied in the service. When Christ sent out his twelve disciples, and also the seventy, his commandment, as to their ministry, was simply this: “And as ye go, preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand;”² or, “the kingdom of God

¹ John iv. 20, &c.

² Matt. x. 7.

is come nigh unto you ;¹ and more privately, " Peace be to this house,"² &c.

The omission of further directions on all these occasions is worthy of especial notice, and leads to the conclusion, that the precise mode of conducting divine worship, and of performing devotion, is not prescribed, and is less important than the disposition and dedication of mind with which it is observed. Yet there is an obvious injunction to be inferred—that, in contradistinction to outward rites and performances, it is to be the service of the heart; the occupation of the mind, rather than that of the hands, the eye, the ear, or the tongue. And it becomes professing Christians generally to consider with seriousness, whether a constant round of services of the latter description does not tend to captivate the senses, excite the imagination, and engross the mind; thus diverting it from that fixedness on heavenly things, and reverent dependence on God, which are necessary to acceptance by Him.

One chief point, which Tyndal endeavoured to illustrate through all his works, was the essential difference between the Old and the New Testaments or covenants. On this head few have had more distinct and pure sentiments. The former dispensation he considered as pointing by signs and ceremonies to the latter—a spiritual but sublime simplicity of worship taking the place of outward pomp and splendour. His great object was to bring the soul before its Creator, to worship Him in spirit and in truth, well knowing the blessed result of such a devotional intercourse.³

It is not by their number or continuity alone that external services are liable to danger. The great object of divine worship and ministry being to promote the honour of God and the instruction and edification of man; if human wisdom be sought by the minister and the people, instead of the wisdom which is from above, that great object will be in danger of being defeated, the attention and expectation will be fixed too much on man, and not enough on the Father of spirits. The insufficiency of man's unenlightened wisdom to minister in divine things, or even to comprehend them, was declared by the Saviour in his impressive address :—" I thank thee, oh Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father,

¹ Luke x. 11.

² Luke x. 5.

³ Offor's Life of Tyndal.

for so it seemed good in thy sight.”¹ The early disciples fully acknowledged this great truth, and admitted the danger of man in his unregenerate state, though gifted with human wisdom and eloquence, interfering in things beyond his penetration. This apprehension often impressed the Apostle Paul; and when he declares that Christ sent him to preach the gospel, he adds, “not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect;” for, says he, “the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” Highly important is this view for the consideration of professing Christians, both ministers and hearers; lest they frustrate the divine purposes, lest they encumber divine truth with excrescences which destroy its simplicity and efficiency.

What are “the two great commandments,” on which, according to the highest authority, “hang all the law and the prophets?”² Not this or that outward observance, not any specific form of worship, or articles of faith, or mode of church government—all which are acknowledged to be important objects, and have excited so much contention—but simply the disposition of the mind—love to God and love to man, which can never exist without their fruits. One disciple declared that “love is the fulfilling of the law,”³ and another asserted that “he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God.”⁴ Far too little consideration has this great principle received in the Christian world.

The “speech and the preaching” of the apostles of our Lord were “in demonstration of the Spirit,” and of that “power,”⁵ which they had known in their own religious experience; by which also they had been called and qualified for the work. They preached Christ Jesus the Lord, and themselves the servants of the people for Jesus’ sake.⁶ They spoke as the Holy Spirit “gave them utterance,”⁷ it was given them from time to time what they should say; and their words, coming from the heart, and being attended with life and power, carried conviction to the souls of the hearers, and produced surprising effects. The case of Peter, when he addressed Cornelius and his companions, is a striking instance of this nature. “And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning; then remembered I the

¹ Luke x. 21.

² Matt. xxii. 40.

³ Rom. xiii. 10.

⁴ 1 John iv. 16.

⁵ 1 Cor. ii. 4.

⁶ 2 Cor. iv. 5.

⁷ Acts ii. 4.

word of the Lord, John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.”¹ Here was an instance of true gospel ministry, accompanied with spiritual baptism, fulfilling our Lord’s commission, “ Go ye therefore and teach,—baptizing,”² &c.

Such, may we not venture to believe, are even now in degree, and would be still more extensively, the blessed effects of all divinely authorised gospel ministry, exercised under the influence of the Holy Spirit, free from covetous, selfish motives, and proceeding from an impulse of religious duty, from a sense of the love of God to the souls of men, from faith in that Saviour who died for them, and from a deep concern for their salvation ? Such a ministry would not be a series of formal, scholastic, lifeless addresses ; but, coming from the heart, under a lively impression of the awful realities involved, we may reverently trust that it would be animated by the love of God and man ; that the Holy Spirit, as humbly waited for, would condescend to give a sense of the states of the hearers, of the nature of the message adapted to their edification ; and to qualify for the performance of the work. Thus, we are encouraged to believe, that in different religious denominations, the sinner has often been warned, the dark heart enlightened, the hard one broken, the proud, the unholy, and the wrathful condemned, the fearful and contrite comforted, and the humble believer confirmed and animated. The gospel has been truly preached, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit effectually administered.

Prayer and thanksgiving would not then consist of languid generalities, or prescribed and commonplace petitions and acknowledgments to the divine Author of all our mercies ; but proceeding from the fresh impulses of the Holy Spirit, being attended by a prostrating view of man’s unworthiness and need, with a sense of the condition of particular congregations, and of the grace repeatedly vouchsafed, would ascend in fervent, devout, and becoming aspirations, with a sustaining reliance on Christ the great Head of the church ; and would, we may humbly trust, be graciously accepted and answered for his sake.

There might indeed be less of preaching ; the “itching ears”³ might be less gratified ; there might be fewer “enticing words”⁴ of man’s invention ; not so much of “the wisdom of this

¹ Acts xi. 15, 16. ² Matt. xxviii. 19. ³ 2 Tim. iv. 3. ⁴ 1 Cor. ii. 4.

world,"¹ of the flowing eloquence, the fascinating music, the studied gestures, the pomp and parade ; the senses and passions might be less excited ; but if there were more of deep, calm, heartfelt, abiding devotion, God would be more glorified, and man, with all his powers and attainments, would abhor himself more completely, and repent in dust and ashes ! Where is the Christian church, in which, as respects both ministers and people, through lively faith in the Lord Jesus, and simple obedience to the teachings of his Spirit, these blessed results may not be more fully brought forth ?

To make converts to a particular denomination, and to build up a certain theological system, have been too much the objects of Christian ministers ; while the full development of the grace of God, and the extended privileges of the gospel, with their exemplification in practice, has often been overlooked or undervalued.

"Persons are so earnest," remarked a pious German minister, "to say a great deal to God in divine worship, that they do not allow themselves time to hear what he would say to them by his Spirit." Would that this were sufficiently considered !

"My time," said our Lord himself, "is not yet come, but your time is always ready."² And so, it is believed, his ministers will often find it, if they look to him alone for direction. Of the apostles we read that, on one occasion, "the Spirit suffered them not to proceed as they intended," and that "they were forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia."³ Is there not some similar guidance still to be known by the waiting minister ?

The calling of one may be to a field of labour in one direction, that of another to a different field in another direction. Thus, "he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty" in Paul "toward the Gentiles."⁴ And the same would doubtless work effectually and prove himself mighty in his ministers of this day, if their faith and dependence were fixed on him, and on the teachings of his Spirit—not on themselves, or on other men. His gracious promise was to be with his people "always, unto the end of the world."⁵ How utterly opposed to this state of dependence on a present Lord is the conversion of the sacred office into a species of local property, a means of pecuniary profit and advancement !"

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 6.

² John vii. 6.

³ Acts xvi. 6, 7.

⁴ Gal. ii. 8.

⁵ Matt. xxviii. 20.

CHAPTER XII.

ILL EFFECTS OF UNDULY EXALTING ONE CLASS OF MEN IN THE CHURCHES, AND ONE MAN IN EACH CONGREGATION, CONTRARY TO APOSTOLIC PRACTICE.

THE provision of endowments on a graduated scale, as the hire or reward of ministerial services in the Christian church, obviously tends to offer prizes to worldly-mindedness, cupidity and ambition ; and to open wide to those evil dispositions a door which should ever be closed against them. The administration of holy things, being a sacred trust of unspeakable importance to the eternal interests of man, requires to be occupied and maintained with purity, spirituality and disinterestedness ; otherwise its essential character is lost, and it becomes corrupted and heartless.

If the motives of men, for undertaking the functions of the ministry, are desired to be simply those of true religious concern and duty, care must be taken not to induce others of a secular and an inferior character ; lest there be brought into the charge of the things of God a class of men, who, however advanced in human learning, neither appreciate nor understand them ; but whose main purpose is to satisfy a vain ambition, to earn their maintenance by such means, and to make a gain of godliness.¹ Standing apart from the people, and separated from them by a marked line of distinction unsupported by the New Testament, such ministers too often assume to themselves, as a professedly sacred body, a character of exclusive superiority in privilege, knowledge and power ; thus greatly lessening their own influence and usefulness ; while many of the despised, poor and ignorant, in the estimation of this world, have a clearer insight into religious truth and obligation, and are better qualified, through more full submission to the power of Divine Grace, to

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 5.

understand the real nature of the Messiah's kingdom, and to advance it in the hearts of men.

There was indeed among the Israelites, under the dispensation of the law, one particular tribe, set apart for the services of the temple and of holy things, and having no inheritance in the land; God having promised them that he himself would be their inheritance.¹ And of this tribe one family was chosen for the priesthood. But, under the gospel, this distinction was abolished, with the other legal separations and ceremonials established by Moses; which were but types and shadows, and only introductory, imperfect and temporary; designed to prepare and discipline the minds of men for the spiritual dispensation of Christ, and for the more clear and full revelation of evangelical truth: the commandment or law being disannulled, on account of its "weakness and unprofitableness."² Yet so prone is the human mind to desire external forms, tangible rites, and objects of sense, and to rest in them, rather than in the spiritual substance and life of religion, that many Judaizing notions and practices were early introduced into the profession of christianity contrary to its genuine spirit; and even now many of the Christian churches are not, it is to be feared, sufficiently alive to the formal and unprofitable character of some of those observances, which they retain and venerate.

But although the dispensation of the law has been fulfilled, and the appointment of a certain priestly tribe abrogated, by the coming and sacrifice of Christ, and by the general gift to mankind of a larger measure of the Holy Spirit, by which all true Christians are made, in a certain sense, "priests unto God;" yet we are assured that special gifts are bestowed on individual members, by the glorified Head of the Church, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edification of the body."³ His especial call, and the qualification by the Holy Spirit, are consequently the essential authority to undertake the sacred charge of the gospel ministry. This view indeed, although it seems to be suffered to operate but little in practice, is generally admitted in theory by the various Christian churches, as highly conducive to the true interests of religion and of mankind at large.

To the carrying it into effect a great obstruction is presented,

¹ Josh. xiii. 33.

² Heb. vii. 18.

³ Eph. iv. 12.

by the restriction of the office of minister to one fixed and paid individual in each congregation ; who has obtained, by education and by purchase, certain human qualifications of learning, initiation and appointment. This restriction, too, is imposed, however much the minds of others present, whether recognised as ministers or not, may be impressed through the power of the Holy Spirit, with "the burthen of the word of the Lord,"¹ and with a secret but sensible call to declare it then and there to the people.

The practice of the early Christian church was widely different; divine worship being then much more of an individual exercise and act : and each one being engaged before the Lord for himself and for herself, according to the variety of gifts and duties then recognised and fulfilled. Thus Paul, in writing to the saints, or to the church at large in Corinth, besides alluding to miraculous powers, recommends them to "desire spiritual gifts;" but especially that they "may prophesy," or minister; speaking "to edification, exhortation, and comfort,"² with the spirit and with the understanding. "If anything," says he, "be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace: for ye may all prophesy (or minister) one by one; that all may learn, and all may be comforted."³ It is obvious that, for this purpose, no settled routine of closely successive services in divine worship could have been suitable. Time must have been allowed for individual retirement of spirit, and a right preparation for service; as the sense of religious duty might press on the minds of any. There must have been opportunity for inwardly receiving and pondering spiritual truth, as well as for hearing the verbal declaration of it. The attention of the assembled church not being fixed only on one individual; each would feel bound to regard Christ as the great spiritual teacher, to prostrate his soul before God, to receive instruction, and to consider seriously with himself whether anything were given to him for the assembly.

The more extended distribution of ministerial qualification and duty, is fully recognised by the apostles in several of their addresses to the early believers: thus we read, "exhort *one another* daily, while it is called to-day;"⁴—“able also to admon-

¹ Zech. ix. 1. ² 1 Cor. xiv. 1, 3. ³ 1 Cor. xiv. 30, 31. ⁴ Heb. iii. 13.

nish *one another*;¹—“confess your faults *one to another*, and pray for *one another*, that ye may be healed.”² The temptation to act on sordid and unworthy motives not being presented, it may be presumed that those of a high and sacred character alone prompted to the performance of the duty; and that if any man ministered, he felt bound to do so, “of the ability which God giveth,”³ that He in all things, and not man, might be glorified! Acknowledged pastors, ministers, and teachers, there doubtless were; and such we may trust will ever be continued, to the edification and comfort of the church. Yet was not the limit drawn so closely, as to preclude any individual worshipper from an opportunity to deliver to the people any exhortation, which, under the influence of the love of God, such an one might feel commissioned to declare; “all things” being “done decently and in order.”⁴

Where a congregation assemble for the avowed purpose of hearing what the appointed minister may deliver, relying on him for spiritual direction, and depending on his ministrations, they are in great danger of neglecting the exercise of those spiritual faculties which God has entrusted to each, and leaving to be performed by another that worship and service, which every one must offer in the temple of his own heart, as unto the Lord, and not before men. The people, with such restricted views of their own spiritual responsibility, are liable to be much more engrossed with the preacher’s performance, his eloquence and learning, than with the serious duty which they themselves have to perform individually. And if, through any unforeseen circumstance, no minister attends, then the opportunity for devotion is considered to be wholly lost.

The essence of the Christian church may be said to rest upon this—not that one man should be the chosen and pre-eminent organ of the Holy Spirit for the leading of the whole—but that all, each according to his peculiar standing, and to the gifts committed to him, should work together, fulfilling their several parts, for the promotion of the Christian life and the common object. The edification of the church was, in its primitive days, the work of all. As some were more particularly required for leading and ruling, so the Christian life developed

¹ Rom. xv. 14. ² James v. 16. ³ 1 Pet. iv. 11. ⁴ 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

itself according to the constitutional peculiarities of individuals; and there resulted in the members of the church the respective gifts or qualifications of government, of helping, of teaching, without constraint on the free development of life in the whole church; "standing fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."¹

¹ Neander and 1 Cor. xiv. 3.

CHAPTER XIII.

ASSUMPTION OF THE PRIESTLY CHARACTER AND OFFICE.

THE birth of our Lord is generally understood to have taken place about seventy-three years before Jerusalem was destroyed ; and during that period, the Christian religion was introduced and planted in Palestine, Asia Minor, and many of the cities of Greece ; as well as in Rome and elsewhere. Christ had distinctly foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, which occurred about thirty-seven years after his crucifixion ; and the believers, acting on his cautions, generally quitted the city and preserved their lives. The Jews who did not perish in the siege, were scattered abroad in Judea and in other countries. Having lost their Levites and priests, together with their sacred temple, and the ancient accompaniments of their divine worship ; they were left in distress and ruin, both temporal and spiritual—the just consequences of denying and crucifying their King and Saviour.

The old heathen deities had also lost much of that reverence which had formerly been paid to them. The ancient oracles, for the most part, had disappeared ; the idolatrous worship was neglected, and the priests found their occupation failing them. The alarm was not confined to the silversmiths of Ephesus, who made shrines for Diana, but spread widely both then and since, “This our craft is in danger to be set at nought, and the temple of the great goddess to be despised ;—by which craft we have our wealth.”¹

The people at large, both Jews and heathens, had been accustomed to outward pomp and pageantry in religion; sensible objects and external performances had been associated with their worship, and had gratified their senses. Although no parallel is to be drawn between the Jewish and heathen devotions—the one being pure and appointed by God, and the other being gross and abominable idolatry²—nor are the two to be esteemed in

¹ Acts xix. 25, 27.

² 1 Peter iv. 3.

any respect equal; yet on the professors of both a clearer day had begun to dawn; and many of their serious and inquiring men were enabled, by the visions of ancient prophecy, and by the clearer revelations of opening Christianity, to look through their ceremonials—so various and so widely different in their origin, character and divine acceptance—“to the end of that which was to be abolished.”¹ They saw and felt that something better and more substantial was in store for mankind, though many knew not what it was. At length the system of pagan idolatry in those countries experienced a downfall; while Judaism had at a somewhat earlier period lost its divine sanction; the law of Moses being fulfilled and consummated in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Christian religion was distinguished by great simplicity and lowliness, by its high-toned morality, by its heart-searching, spiritual character, and by its freedom from ceremonial observances. The gospel of Christ, and of salvation through faith in him, was offered to the acceptance of all, whether Jews or Gentiles, learned or ignorant, bond or free; having been especially preached to the poor. The wise heathen philosophers, as well as the self-righteous Israelites, generally looked upon it with contempt: “Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.”² The former had already put Christ to death, and now both of them persecuted his followers. Christianity had little that was inviting to their natural pride and ancient prejudices. But “the common people” accepted it “gladly;”³ numerous local churches being formed, and many thousands gathered to the faith, both in Judea and in other countries.

Frequent were the cautions given by the apostles, that the believers should not throw off the pure and spiritual character of their early profession, and entangle themselves again with the yoke of bondage.⁴ The Apostle Paul especially expressed his fear, “lest, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so their minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”⁵ He saw that already were arising “false prophets, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ,”⁶ bringing the believers into bondage and making a gain

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 13.

² 1 Cor. i. 23.

³ Mark xii. 37.

⁴ Gal. *passim*; Acts xv. 10.

⁵ 2 Cor. xi. 3.

⁶ 2 Cor. xi. 13.

of them. These corrupters soon increased in the church ; for as its numbers multiplied, and the profession became honourable, designing men, both Jews and heathens, adopted the Christian name from insincere and selfish motives.

Covetousness in some, and superstition in others, excited a great and restless desire to discover some points in the new and spreading religion, which might be rendered a means of affording emolument and of feeding ambition, as well as of gratifying the senses and the common partiality for bodily exercises. In the simple outlines of christianity drawn by its divine Author, and further filled up and exemplified by his apostles, as well as in the more dubious field of tradition, ground was earnestly sought, on which to build up outward rites ; to establish something of an imposing external nature, which might be substituted for the ancient ceremonies, in accordance with the popular prejudices ; and which might, at the same time, be constituted a means of lucrative occupation for the ministers of the new faith. Hence arose multiplied superstitions and ceremonies, as the church became gradually more corrupt.

"A principle," says Neander, "again sprang forth, akin to the Old Testament position—a new *making outward* of the kingdom of God. Religion became in fact a system of paganized christianity,"¹ and in some countries, under certain professions, it stills remains too much so.

But further, the primitive ministers were numerous, and generally poor and illiterate ; many of them however were powerful in word and doctrine, and possessed great influence with the people. Were all to be permitted to exercise the ministry, who professed a concern to do so ? Might not some limits be set to the number of these ? Were there no proper distinctions to be observed with respect to them, as in the cases of the Levites and priests of old ? Such an exclusiveness would more fully promote the designs of the self-interested and covetous, and keep out those whose simplicity and unaspiring views stood in the way of ambition. Christ had spoken of giving the keys of the kingdom of heaven to Peter, and also to the other disciples. He had spoken of binding and loosing, of forgiving and retaining sins ; but could this power be understood

¹ Neander's History of the Church, 1st Period, 2nd Sect.

to be conferred upon all, who might thenceforth believe through the ministry of the apostles? Assumptions like these appear to have led to the setting up of restrictive claims of spiritual eminence and superiority, on behalf of Peter and his pretended successors, which he himself had never entertained for a moment. Hence arose popes, and priests, and numberless other ecclesiastical orders, of high spiritual pretensions; and a politico-spiritual hierarchy was gradually established.

As a part of these worldly views and to extend them still further, an erroneous system of a Christian priesthood, in imitation of that of the Jews, was insidiously introduced into the apostatizing church. Certain ceremonies, not possessing moral weight or effect, were inculcated, as necessary to salvation; and a certain class of men put themselves forward as priests to perform them. Not endued in many cases with real moral superiority, they professed to be too holy to take any part in temporal concerns, and claimed the property and contributions of the church, with the support of secular authority; assuming to themselves the sole right by inheritance or succession, to perform those ceremonies, and to exercise the priesthood—the office of mediation between man and his great Creator.

"The universal priestly character of believers, grounded in the common and immediate relation of all to Christ as the source of the divine life, was repressed; the idea being again introduced of a particular mediatory priesthood, attached to a distinct order."¹ Bingham, quoting the writings of Origen, Cyprian, Tertullian and others, asserts that it was in the third century that the distinction of clergy and laity became generally recognised, and that it was evidently derived from the Jewish church. Origen objected to the ministrations of laymen in the presence of bishops, but was answered by an appeal to the frequent practice of the church even at that period.² The limitation of the exercise of the ministry was however gradually gaining ground.

Fearfully erroneous was this re-introduction of the priestly character, and closely connected with that worldly spirit which had overrun the church, bringing into it pecuniary endowments, great revenues, and secular power. Had its officers and ministers retained their pristine poverty and lowliness, so rank a weed

¹ Neander's Church History, 1st Period, Sect. 2. ² Eusebius, v. 19.

would not have grown on the soil. But the wealth and privileges which had been heaped upon the church, and which it had to bestow, became a prize that tempted the covetous and worldly-minded from all quarters.

The Jewish high priests were types of Christ, who was made our High Priest for ever ; “not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.”¹ And in the gospel day, true believers are described as “a spiritual house, a holy priesthood ; to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by him.”² The Christian church needs not therefore a human successor to the Jewish high priest, a man-appointed priesthood, or an outward altar or offerings. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, fulfilled the law, with its various types and emblematic ceremonies ; offering himself once for all, for the sins of the whole world, in fulfilment and abrogation of ancient sacrifices : and to him all true Christians are graciously invited to come freely, as to their great and only High Priest, Mediator and Intercessor with the Father.

“The advancement of God’s kingdom,” says Neander, “the diffusion of christianity, and the good of each particular community were not designed to be the duty of one select class of Christians alone, but the most immediate concern of each individual. Every one, from the position assigned him by the invisible Head of the church, was to co-operate in promoting this object, by the special gifts which God had bestowed on him —gifts grounded in his peculiar nature, but that nature renewed and ennobled by the Holy Spirit. There was no distinction of spiritual and secular ; but all were to be animated by the Spirit of God, and not by the spirit of the world.”³

To the injury of the cause of christianity, the unevangelical notion of a separate priesthood has been permitted to prevail in several of the professing churches. Insensible to their own high privileges, and not enough estimating Christ in his mediatorial character, as a high priest for ever over the house of God, by whom each individual believer is graciously permitted to have access to the Father in heaven ; many Christian communities permitted a few men to usurp their spiritual rights and calling, and to profess to perform their individual devotional duties ; thus raising a barrier between themselves and their Maker, and

¹ Heb. vii. 16.

² 1 Peter ii. 5.

³ Neander’s Church History.

setting up an unscriptural priestly class, who interposed their own ministrations and superstitious performances, on the plea that they were essential to the acceptance and salvation of every one. And though light has here and there broken through and exposed its fallacy, yet as a notion productive of unconcern and deadness in the mass, and of forwardness and presumption in the few, it requires, even now, to be held up to serious and prayerful consideration, both publicly and privately.

The unsound, narrow view of the position and qualification of the Christian ministry, which desired to perpetuate its own superiority, constituted only part of the evil. It had the injurious effect of taking religion out of the hands and minds of the people at large, and causing them to look with blind reliance on the ecclesiastics, as the sole appointed agents of access to God, and of participation in his spiritual or even temporal blessings. "The laity" thought themselves excluded from even reading the sacred volume, and their teachers generally encouraged the idea.¹ This restriction of the use of the Scriptures began in the seventh century in the east; and the Latins speedily adopted the same precaution for preserving the unity of the church, and for concealing its degeneracy and abuses.² Religion was deemed to be an object chiefly for priests, monks and friars; it lost its practical, diffusive character, its healthful connexion with the daily affairs of life; and was deemed to consist of a round of superstitious devotional services, which the priests or clergy alone must perform, in order to give them acceptance; and of dedicating property to the use of these ecclesiastics, or fulfilling their arbitrary commands. Justice, mercy and truth in common concerns were little estimated or greatly neglected; and religion, as it was called, merged into superstition and error, gross credulity of imposture, and blind submission to idolatry.

In fully admitting the priesthood of Christ, we are bound seriously to consider whether we are enough sensible of our own gospel privileges, of reconciliation and immediate access to God, through him; and whether we are making a right use and application of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and its sanctifying grace bestowed upon each: whether we allow it to purify our motives, to elevate our thoughts and desires to heavenly things, to season

¹ Milner, Ninth Century, chap. ii.

² Waddington's History.

our tempers and conversation, to extend its influence over our daily habits and pursuits; leading us to sympathize with the distressed, to keep ourselves unspotted from the world; and “whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do,”¹ to do all with an eye to the permission and glory of God. Is not this practical religion, as distinguished from a formal, lifeless profession?

The Paulicians, a spiritually-minded people of Thrace and Asia Minor, who flourished in the eighth and following centuries, accounted the distinct Christian priesthood, founded on that of the Old Testament, among the corruptions of the evangelical element. They recognised it as belonging to the peculiar essence of christianity, that it aimed to establish a higher fellowship of life among men of all ranks and classes, tolerating no such distinctions as the existing ones between the clergy or priests and the laity. Those among them who administered offices in the church, were looked upon as the other members, and were not distinguished from them by dress or other outward marks.² These people are very favourably mentioned by Protestant historians. The Waldenses, a few centuries later, held many of the same Christian sentiments.

Many of the early English reformers maintained that every real Christian, although he be a layman, is nevertheless a true priest; and that every such layman may teach and preach the gospel, together with those who are appointed to do so. They asserted that the calling of God was the necessary qualification, and not the appointment by man.³

William Dell, an enlightened minister of the University of Cambridge, writing about 1646, declared as follows:—“The clergy or ecclesiastical men have all along, under the reign of Antichrist, distinguished themselves from other Christians, whom they called the laity; and have made up a kingdom among themselves, separate from the lay, calling themselves by the name of *the church*, and reckoning other Christians but as common or unclean. Whereas, in the true church of Christ, there is no distinction nor difference of persons—no clergy and laity, no ecclesiastical and temporal: but they are all, as Peter describes them, “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood,” &c. All Christians, through the baptism of the Spirit, are made

¹ 1 Cor. x. 31. ² Neander's Church History, 4th Period, 3rd Sec.

³ Fox's Acts and Mon.

priests alike unto God, and every one hath right and power to speak the word ; and the ministers have no right at all to this office, but by the consent of the church. Thus presbyters and bishops—or, which is all one, elders and overseers—differ nothing from other Christians, except in the office of the word. But Antichrist hath cast out the simplicity of Christian people, dividing the church into clergy and laity, distinguishing the clergy by their habit from other Christians, that they may appear holier and another order. This hath proved a seminary of implacable discord and heart-burning in the church. For here-upon the clergy have made themselves lords of the laity, have hated and opposed them ; and all this to the making void Christian brotherhood and communion.”¹

On the same subject, Milton thus strongly expresses himself :—“ In the first evangelic times—and it were happy for Christendom if it were so again—ministers of the gospel were nothing else distinguished from other Christians, but by their spiritual knowledge and sanctity of life ; for which the church elected them to be her teachers and overseers ; though not thereby to separate them from whatever calling she found them following besides, as the example of St. Paul declares, and the first times of christianity. When once they affected to be called a clergy, and became, as it were, a peculiar tribe of Levites, a party, a distinct order in the commonwealth, bred up for divines in babbling schools, and fed at the public cost, good for nothing else but what was good for nothing, they soon grew idle ; that idleness, with fulness of bread, begat pride and perpetual contention with their feeders, the despised laity, through all ages ever since ; to the perverting of religion and the disturbance of all Christendom. And we may confidently conclude it never will be otherwise, while they are thus upheld, undepending on the church, on which alone they anciently depended.”

“ The old idea of hierarchy,” says a modern Italian, awaking out of the dreams of Romanism, “ faded from my mind, and that of community of spiritual gifts and privileges occupied its place.” And he says again, “ The priests in ancient times did not form a *caste* ; but were merely the heads of families that were the most respected, and were chosen by the people, on account of their wisdom or piety, to the office of minister or

¹ Way of peace and unity in the church.

elder. To raise the spirit of christianity, we must combat the idolatry of mere forms; and to purify religion, which has become corrupted by priests, we must oppose everything that comes under the head of priestcraft.—The priesthood is that which divides, opposes, denounces and excommunicates.”

“The religion of the gospel,” says Archbishop Whately, “is a religion without priest, altar, sacrifice or temple; all which it distinctly excluded.”

The views of Dr. Arnold on what he termed “the *heresy* of the Christian priesthood,” were clear and decided. “I believe,” said he, “that there is in the Christian church neither priesthood nor divine succession of governors; and that, freed from these notions, it is divested of all unchristian and tyrannical power.”¹ “The grand characteristic of the Christian church is the co-operation of society, through the several faculties and qualities of its members, for the attainment of the highest moral good of all. The life of the church may be injured by an extreme predominance of the activity of some members, by which the others are necessarily rendered less active.”²

He remarks that, “If the notion be spread, that out of a given number of men some are required to be holier than the rest, the effect is, according to a well-known fact in our moral nature, that you do not by this means raise the standard of holiness for the few, but you lower it for the many.” “This,” he contends, “has happened in the case of oaths; for men inculcating that perjury was a much worse sin than falsehood, have by no means promoted the cause of truth, but the contrary. They have led people to think perjury to be no worse than they ought to think falsehood.”³

“The assumption on which a priesthood proceeds, is the *perpetual* superiority, in a religious point of view, of some men over others; so that the inferior require the mediation of the superior, before they can offer to God any acceptable worship. Here is the difference between a ministry and a priesthood; that while a *minister* of religion labours to destroy his own superiority over his neighbours, by communicating to them all his knowledge, a *priest* wishes his superiority to be perpetual, and therefore keeps his knowledge to himself; certain doctrines or mysteries are held

¹ Lectures on Modern History.

² A Fragment on the Church.

³ Eleventh Sermon.

in reserve, in order to secure to the superiority of the priest a perpetual duration.

"A priesthood may be grounded on a superiority either of knowledge or of race ; and it assumes in both cases that the superiority is perpetual. The man who is superior says to his neighbours, "I must pray to God for you ; for you know not how to pray for yourselves : I must perform the rites of religion for you ; for you know not how to perform them properly." But then comes the natural answer, which the minister of religion so gladly welcomes, but which the priest dreads and evades : " Teach *us* to pray also, teach *us* how to worship God acceptably." The priest repels this request, by saying " it is not right to communicate these mysteries to the vulgar !"¹

How contrary is this to the comprehensive and compassionate disposition of our Lord, who preached the gospel especially to the poor, and pronounced a woe upon some, because they had taken away the key of knowledge, entering not in themselves, and hindering those who entered !

¹ Appendix to Eleventh Sermon.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION, AND ON THE MINISTERIAL POWER TO FORGIVE SIN AND TO CONFER DIVINE GRACE.

It must be acknowledged to be somewhat difficult to treat the subject of divine right and apostolical succession with mild reprehension. Of all the assumptions of ecclesiastics, this is one of the most gross, vain and presumptuous. Therefore, though partially alluded to under other heads, a distinct and more particular notice seems to be required. Had there been no endowments, no secular power and privileges, to foster and support such an arrogant notion, it would doubtless have long since been exploded. These appear to be the secret causes, which, through many and great changes, have given it encouragement and perpetuity.

The ground assumed for the claim is this,—that our Lord declared, with respect to Peter, “On this rock will I build my church;”¹ that he appointed Peter to be the head and bishop of his church, commanding him to feed his sheep and lambs;² that to him and the other apostles, as well as to those whom he or they should appoint as bishops and ministers, and to their personal successors in these offices, he gave the keys of his church, and of the kingdom of heaven, to bind and to loose, to forgive and to retain sin, &c., &c. It is also pretended that this authority has been, from the time of Peter, and still is, handed down from one person, and from one generation to another, by the laying on of hands.

Surely every unprejudiced, candid reader of the New Testament will have no hesitation, in deciding on the groundlessness of this claim to primacy on behalf of Peter, zealous and warm-hearted as he was. He himself and Isaiah declared Christ alone to be “a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation.”³ James seems rather than Peter to have undertaken to pronounce the

¹ Matt. xvi. 18. ² John xxi. 15, 16. ³ Isaiah xxviii. 16; 1 Peter ii. 6.

judgment of the church,¹ and John was the disciple more especially beloved and favoured by his Lord. The bishops of the church of Alexandria and others claimed to be successors of Mark, vindicating their authority as equal to that derived from Peter; and the patriarch of the Copts still maintains it. But indeed neither of the apostles assumed power over the rest; on the contrary, Peter exhorted the elders not to be "as lords over God's heritage, but as ensamples to the flock,"² showing himself to be the true follower of Him who "was meek and lowly in heart," and who was among his disciples "as one that serveth."³

It is evident that an unbroken line of apostolical succession, if it exist at all, must have come down through the Romish church, through many unholy bishops and no less unholy popes. Men of false principles and wicked lives, and rival popes who anathematized each other, must have constituted base links in this monstrous chain. But history is far from proving any such continuity; and even if this were fully proved, the idea would tend to confirm the spiritual usurpation and arrogance of the Roman pontiffs, and their many unworthy ecclesiastical appointments. In fact, the idea virtually implies that true faith and personal holiness are not necessary qualifications of a real successor of the apostles; but that the outward touch of a man, holy or unholy, faithful or unfaithful, is the great requisite to constitute a Christian minister, and to convey the true spiritual authority from one generation to another.⁴

To describe thus briefly this doctrine, which may be denominated the essence of priesthood, will be sufficient to convince most minds of its entire opposition to the truth of the gospel of Christ. Gregory the Great, in the sixth century,

¹ Acts xv. 13.

² 1 Peter v. 3.

³ Matt. xi. 29; Luke xxii. 27.

⁴ Baronius, the Roman Catholic historian, confesses that in a succession of fifty popes, not one pious or virtuous man sat in the chair; that there were no popes for some years together, and at other times two or three at once; and that there were upwards of twenty schisms, one of which continued fifty years, the popes of Rome and Avignon excommunicating each other.—*Neal's Puritans.*

The Italian priests profess that the confessional is the place, where the exercise of the power of the keys to bind or to loose sin goes on. They parade them hanging at their mystic girdles and turn them gravely, too often finding the imposition a profitable one, and locking, rather than unlocking, the way to the heavenly kingdom.

appears to have been the first who asserted the claim. That it arose with many other assumptions, among mercenary and superstitious ecclesiastics, in the night of the apostacy ; and that popish priests upheld it under the reign of the man of sin for their own selfish ends, is not surprising ; but that it should have been permitted to survive the Reformation, and should even now be maintained by many episcopal protestants as of divine authority, is passing strange ! Arrogance shows itself indeed under many forms, but perhaps in none so extravagantly as in this, claiming its right to be nursed in the lap of peculiar privileges with exclusive temporalities. A strong proof is afforded by it, that the Reformation in some quarters has hitherto been very incomplete ; and that that which is professedly the Lord's house, is still, to some extent, not only "a place of merchandise,"¹ but a seat of lamentable bigotry and assumption !

"A priestly power," says Dr. Arnold, "is claimed for Christian ministers on two grounds—first, it is said that their administration is essential to the sacraments ; and secondly, that they have a certain power of the keys—an expression in itself sufficiently vague, and which exists under a convenient mysticism. Both these notions, when developed, are too unchristian to bear the light."²

The idea of apostolical succession, found among the members of some few bodies of Christians, naturally tends to elevate them far above all the rest in their own estimation ; and, if consistently carried out, to degrade other Christian churches to a still lower rank. It implies that the ministers of the former are the only authorised instructors and leaders of the people ; that their services alone being acknowledged and blessed by the great Head of the Church, are efficacious to the health of the soul : while others, as they maintain, are mere pretenders and false teachers, running without being sent, "blind leaders of the blind."³ It takes away the honour due to Christ, the living head of the church, and the only author of the spiritual qualification of its officers ; setting up instead a false, antichristian system of the mediation of a priestly caste between God and the people, and arrogating to a few an excessive claim to authority in divine things. The Judaizing doctrine of sacerdotal as well as of sacramental efficacy, admitted in the dark ages, and fit only

¹ John ii. 16.

² Appendix to Eleventh Sermon.

³ Matt. xv. 14.

for them, tends to lay waste the doctrine of justification by faith, the foundations of truth and holiness, the great principles of the gospel of Christ.

The first English Reformers considered that bishops and presbyters are the same, and that there are only two orders of church officers of divine appointment, viz., bishops and deacons. Dr. Bancroft, in 1588, was one of the first who maintained that the bishops of England were a distinct order from priests or deacons, and had, by divine right, authority over them and the church. Great controversy followed, and the assumption has ever since been supported by an influential party.¹ The Papists very naturally deny to the Church of England all such pretensions, on account of its alleged schismatic separation from the "mother church." The claim of the Romish church to apostolic succession and authority, groundless though it be, is evidently more direct than that of any Protestants. Indeed how can any Protestants deny the authority of Rome, who through her profess to derive their own ?

In the reigns of James and Charles I. great stress began to be laid on the divine right of bishops, and on their uninterrupted succession from the apostle Peter, through the church of Rome : the idea being often broached, " no bishop, no king :" though the two authorities sometimes acted in direct hostility towards one another. " Miserable were we," says Dr. Pocklington, " if he that now sits Archbishop of Canterbury could not derive his succession from St. Austin, St. Austin from St. Gregory, and St. Gregory from St. Peter."² From that period to the present it has been recognised as an avowed claim of the Anglican church, and has obtained consideration and weight among many of its members. The Scotch presbyterians have never acknowledged it. During the Commonwealth, the chain of episcopal succession was very nearly broken, most of the old bishops having died, and there being no regular means of appointing new ones, which caused great anxiety to those who depended on an uninterrupted line.³ But the king, the deans and chapters were restored in time to relieve the difficulty.

The number of professing Christians is hoped to be but small, who really entertain such narrow and unworthy views of the largeness and freeness of the grace of God, and of the comprehen-

¹ Neale's Puritans.

² Ibid, vol. ii.

³ Ibid, vol. iv.

hensive blessings of the gospel of Christ, and even most of those who do so, if they candidly consider the subject in its several bearings and consequences, must shrink from the idea with abhorrence. To all who have been in doubt upon it, these remarks are submitted with seriousness and good will, in the earnest desire that they may consider the question with candour, and that the Spirit of Christ may lead them to perceive and altogether to renounce the fallacy.

May we not presume that Christ committed spiritual power and authority to his apostles, not merely as men, but only so long as they should continue faithful to him. If he sanctioned the principles of transmission, it must be of that which they had, and not of that which they had not; and how soon did even Peter, one of the twelve, that small number selected by our Lord himself, deny his divine Master, and fall into evil for a season? while Judas, another of them, apostatized so far as to betray him, and was pronounced to be a "devil." Let those, then, who plead for apostolical succession, and let all other ministers likewise, consider seriously to which of the apostles they are the true successors: whether to those who, notwithstanding many faintings and mis-steppings, retained their integrity; or to him who preferred the "silver" to Christ, and "betrayed the Son of Man with a kiss."¹ Surely none can imagine for a moment that Judas retained any degree of spiritual authority, while thus committing or contriving sin; yet to him, as far as appears, equally with the others, had the words been addressed, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven," &c.² If then Judas by transgression fell, and lost his spiritual functions, they also who partake of the spirit of Judas, who fall from the true faith, and deny their Lord in life or doctrine, may be pronounced, while they continue in this state, to possess no religious authority whatever in his church. They may indeed be successors of Iscariot; but of Peter in his zeal for Christ, or of the disciple whom Jesus loved, they neither follow the pattern nor possess the holy privileges. Even if they have prophesied and done many wonderful works in his name, the sentence still is "depart from me ye that work iniquity."³ Their hearts not being "right in the sight of God,"

¹ Luke xxii. 48.

² Matt. xviii. 18.

³ Matt. vii. 23.

they have "neither part nor lot in the matter,"¹ whatever may be their pretensions.

All claimants to religious authority, through an imaginary patent of lineal inheritance, may well be instructed by the example of the Jews, to whom John the Baptist said, "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."² Christ also declared to them, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham."³ How can any now imagine, through a somewhat similar error, that they can possibly be the true successors of the Apostles, or possess any of their authority, while strangers to their evangelical spirit, and not bringing forth the genuine fruits of the pure and holy religion of Christ? Not having the faith, they cannot be the children of Abraham.

Let all therefore lay aside this idle, flimsy figment of divine right and apostolical succession, and sincerely inquire who are the true successors of the faithful apostles. Are they not all those, who, having experienced a death unto sin and a new birth unto holiness, and being endued by Christ with spiritual gifts for the ministry, exercise the same with purity of motive and singleness of eye, as unto the Lord and not unto men—who humbly endeavour, through the help of his Spirit, that their lives and principles may be conformed to the standard of the gospel; holding fast true faith and charity, bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit, and knowing a reconciliation to God through Christ. To substitute, for the experience of these necessary qualifications, the bare imposition of human hands, or to esteem it essential, is surely to derogate from the divine law of immutable righteousness, and to debase the character of the Christian ministry!

Arrogance and exclusiveness are not confined, however, to the assertors of apostolical succession, but are to be found in most, if not in all churches. "We are right and you are wrong," is too apt to be confidently maintained, by professors, in words or conduct, and in a spirit which has little resemblance to the humility and gentleness of Christ. That they themselves are wrong, at least in the disposition of mind, whatever may be their theoretical system, is but too apparent.

¹ Acts viii. 21.

² Matt. iii. 9.

³ John viii. 39.

Enlightened Christians in different ages, and especially the English Reformers, have generally contended against the notion of apostolical succession, as a mere imposition.

Wicliffe says, “He that followeth Peter the nighest in good living is next to him in succession. You talk of Peter, but I see none of you that followeth his lowly manners, nor indeed the manners of his successors till the time of Sylvester.”¹

Walter Brute, another English Reformer and learned man of the fourteenth century, asserted that “Christ alone is the head of the church, giving power and virtue to the members; that no especial authority to bind and to loose was given to Peter beyond the other disciples, and that the idea of apostolical succession was a popish invention.”²

Very similar is the language of the illustrious Lord Cobham, about 1413, expressed in his usually strong terms: “He that followeth Peter most rightly in pure living, is next unto him in succession; but your lordly order esteemeth not the lowly behaviour of poor Peter, whatsoever ye prate of him. Neither care ye greatly for the humble manners of them that succeeded him, till the time of Sylvester, which for the more part were martyrs. Ye can let all their good conditions go by you, and not hurt yourselves with them at all. All the world knoweth this well enough, and yet ye can make boast of Peter.”³

“Some may object,” says John Locke, “that no society can be a true church, unless it have a bishop or presbyter, with ruling authority derived from the very Apostles, and continued down to the present time by an uninterrupted succession. To these I answer, let them show me the edict by which Christ has imposed that law upon his church. And let not any man think me impertinent, if, in a thing of this consequence, I require that the terms of that edict be very express and positive. For the promise he has made us, that wheresoever two or three are gathered together in his name, he will be in the midst of them, seems to imply the contrary. Whether such an assembly want anything necessary to a true church, pray do you consider: certain I am that nothing can there be wanting to the salvation of souls, which is sufficient to our purpose. I consent that these men, who lay so much stress on continued succession, have a ruler of their church established by such a long series as they

¹ Gilpin’s Life of Wicliffe. ² Fox’s Acts and Mon. vol. i. ³ Ibid.

deem necessary ; provided I may have liberty at the same time to join that society, in which I am persuaded those things are to be found, which are necessary to the salvation of my soul.”¹

“I am fully satisfied,” remarks Bishop Hoadley, “that till a consummate stupidity be established and spread over the land, nothing tends so much to destroy all respect to the clergy, as the demand of more than can be due to them ; and nothing has so effectually thrown contempt upon a regular succession of the ministry, as the calling no succession regular, but what was [held to be] uninterrupted, and the making the eternal salvation of Christians to depend upon that uninterrupted succession ; of which the most learned must have the least assurance, and the unlearned can have no notion but through ignorance and credulity.”²

“The power of the keys,” says Gavazzi very truly in 1851, “has been too often used to imprison both body and mind ; too rarely to unlock the mental and corporeal energies of man.”

“We must at once get rid,” says another Italian reformer, “of the notion of the Protestant bishops respecting apostolical succession, and all its presumed rights and privileges. Except as it may bear on this, the question between the episcopal and presbyterian forms of church government is altogether secondary.”

The ministerial or instrumental power claimed by man, to confer divine grace and to pardon sin, is so important, that it demands further consideration. Christians have believed in most, if not in all ages, that to some holy men, and especially to ministers of the gospel, Christ has given authority, in certain circumstances, to declare forgiveness of sins, as well as to dispense spiritual grace, or in other words, to “minister the Spirit,”³ or bestow “the gift of the Holy Ghost.”⁴ This instrumental authority, sometimes termed *the power of the keys*,⁵ is spoken of in the New Testament as both promised and exercised, and is implied in many of the addresses of our Lord to his disciples.⁶

The ministry of the word, the laying on of hands, and other religious services, are alluded to in Scripture as outward means employed in these spiritual operations ; which also are often wrought immediately through the Holy Spirit. Man is always

¹ Letters on Toleration.

² Howe’s Episcopacy.

³ Gal. iii. 5.

⁴ Acts viii. 18.

⁵ Matt. xvi. 19.

⁶ Matt. xviii. 19 ; John xx. 23.

represented as the mere instrument—God as the great condescending Agent. Without his Holy Spirit, man is dark and powerless; he knows nothing and can do nothing in divine things. This Spirit alone is his light and strength, and if he abide not under its influence, if he be not believing, holy, watchful, he has “neither part nor lot in the matter.” Money or power cannot procure it, talents or learning cannot command it, nor can any performance of his fellow-men supply his own deficiency.

It is the belief of many persons in some Christian communities, both papists and protestants—and their acknowledged formularies of doctrine support the belief—that *their* bishops and ministers alone, being rightly ordained, possess this power; that it has been handed down to them from one generation to another; that it is still transmitted indelibly through the imposition of hands and prayer; and that even faith and holiness are not absolutely necessary. By the administration of one rite, the ministers assert that they are empowered to plant the seeds of divine grace even in infants; to take away that original sin which they believe to exist; and to make them, by a spiritual birth, new creatures, partakers of a fresh life, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Through another rite, their bishops undertake to confirm and strengthen this life. By a third, the ministers profess to renew it, in those few persons who receive the ceremony. And finally, by another, forgiveness of sins is assumed to be imparted to the dying.

This great spiritual authority is, according to the views of many, exerted by such ministers or priests in the use of the prescribed rites under all circumstances, except those of mortal sin or unworthiness in the recipients;¹ while, according to the views of others, the result is nullified by moral impediments on either side. The authority is claimed as one, which men ordained or appointed by others acquire a divine right to exercise; and which they may use or not: the consequences being, the imparting of spiritual life to the people, or the withholding of it from them, and therefore intimately affecting their eternal salvation. If such an authority be possessed by any body or succession of men, it must be pronounced to be an extraordinary endowment!

Other Christians however believe—and the author avows

¹ Twenty-sixth Article, Anglican Church.

himself to be one of these—that although man, through the aid of divine grace, may often promote the edification of those around him, yet the spiritual life and eternal salvation of each individual are necessarily dependent, not on the will and performances of any of his fellow beings, nor on the reception of particular ceremonies; but on true individual faith in Christ, as the Saviour of the world; this faith necessarily producing obedience to his divine grace, which has appeared to all men, teaching them to forsake sin and to live in holiness. They believe that Christ died for all men, as an atonement for the sins of all, and that this grace or Holy Spirit visits all immediately, so that all are made responsible and left without excuse; but that often it is imparted and more powerfully impressed through the instrumentality of true ministers of Christ, and of other holy persons possessing the spirit of the apostles; that such are enabled, as his humble dependent servants, not in their own wills, but in submission to the divine will, to speak and act in demonstration of the spirit and of power, and to communicate the same to others who receive their ministrations with believing hearts, as well as to comfort them in the hope of divine forgiveness: but that these holy instruments and Christian ministers, if they abide not in Christ, if they depart from the faith and hope of the gospel, whatever their former experiences or outward succession, become spiritually dead, loosing all true authority in the church, as well as their own hope of salvation. The scriptures testify that any living power, which such are permitted to possess, dwells only in themselves “as in earthen vessels,” and not by any personal or official adherence; so that all such excellency and treasure must be confessed to be of the Lord and not of man.

Now it may be fairly asked, In which of these two classes of doctrine is there presumption or fanaticism, or danger of spiritual pride, or inconsistency with the New Testament, and with the great fundamental doctrines of the insufficiency and worthlessness of merely human and external qualifications, and of the necessity of living faith and personal holiness? Can any man safely presume on having obtained, by purchase or through a mere ceremony or succession, an absolute and indefeasible right for life, either in himself, or as the minister of Christ, to forgive sin and to confer divine grace? Or rather should not all

men, however highly and spiritually gifted by God, or however ordained or honoured by man, always remember that, through unbelief or hardness of heart, they may lose their spiritual life and virtue, and may themselves be cast away ?

Is not the presumption which has been spoken of, unless it can be excused on the ground of unwilling ignorance, a strong proof in itself that such have not that Spirit or grace, which they so vainly claim to themselves an exclusive authority to confer ? Fearful are the consequences to any religious community, whose ministers and other influential persons forget their entire dependence from day to day on the great spiritual Head of the church, and presume on a supposed divine right, an imaginary apostolic succession, and an external ceremony !

We can scarcely suppose such presumption to be exceeded, except in another case of superstitious priests, who claim to themselves a startling power, by a certain process of consecration, to create the Deity himself under the form of bread and wine, and to present him to the people for adoration. Well may Mahomedans and Heathens be shocked with such profane pretensions on the part of Christian ministers ! Those who have become involved in such flagrant errors, have strong claims on the compassionate interest of their fellow-Christians, while the errors themselves are judged and strongly condemned.

CHAPTER XV.

THE TRUE MINISTERS OF CHRIST, HOWEVER CIRCUMSTANCED AS
TO HUMAN LEARNING OR APPOINTMENT, AND WHETHER MALE
OR FEMALE, ARE QUALIFIED, CALLED AND COMMISSIONED BY
HIMSELF.

OUR Lord assured the Jews that he came that they might "have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."¹ The Apostle Paul also declared of him that "when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men ; and he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers ; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."² Again he says, "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit : for to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another divers kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues ; but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

These and many other passages of the New Testament show what the call to the ministry and the qualification for it were, in the primitive Christian church; exhibiting a pattern to after ages of those spiritual preliminaries which remain to be necessary to the present day. All true ministerial ability must still be derived, through the Holy Spirit, from the great Head of the universal church ; and this constitutes the absolute sufficiency of such a qualification, without certificates of human learning or formalities of appointment by man. Doubtless learning is very good and useful, when rightly estimated and employed ; and the approbation of our fellow-believers is desirable, expedient, and

¹ John x. 10.

² Eph. iv. 8, 11, 12.

³ 1 Cor. xii. 4, 8, 11.

entitled to deference and respect: but still these are matters comparatively of second importance; a divine call and qualification, or the absence of them, being the first consideration—the grand distinction between the true ministry and the false, the living and the lifeless, the edifying and the unprofitable; which it is of the greatest moment ever to keep in view. The highest human learning and exaltation, if not possessed and exercised under divine influence, operate to produce self-esteem, and thus frustrate, rather than promote the great work of true, efficacious gospel-ministry. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”¹ “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.”²

Unless the soul be enlightened from on high; unless the call of the Divine Master summon, and the influence of his Holy Spirit from time to time accompany and prepare for labour in the spiritual harvest of the world, vain will be intellectual talents and learning for this great work. Professors may educate and appoint, dignitaries may lay on their hands, and popular assemblies may elect and applaud; but all this will be only solemn mockery, unless the great Head of the church choose and send forth, and the unction from the Holy One—the divine anointing for the work—prepare and attend the minister. Where these are wanting, the language will still be applicable, “Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow.”³ Serious is the warning contained in the declaration of Christ: “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity!”⁴

“The meek ministers of Christ,” says Wicliffe, “have, by a special gift of God, knowledge and mind to preach the gospel; neither is it lawful for a bishop or any other man to let or hinder them, lest thereby they should let the word of God, that it have not free course.” “Priests,” said he, “may best go

¹ John iii. 6.

² 1 Cor. ii. 11.

³ Isa. l. 11.

⁴ Matt. vii. 22, 23.

and dwell among the people, without challenging of men, where they may most profit, and in convenient time come and go, after stirring of the Holy Ghost, and not be bound by sinful men's jurisdiction from the better doing.”¹

Robert Wimbleton, a zealous minister, in a discourse delivered in 1389, on the text, “the kingdom of heaven is like to a householder,” inquires thus of each of the priests:—“ How hast thou entered? Friend, how enteredst thou hither? Who brought thee into this office?—truth or simony, God or the devil, grace or money, the flesh or the Spirit? Give the reckoning, if thou canst. If thou canst not, I rede [or advise] that thou tarry to learn, for perhaps one night thou shalt be called. Hast thou entered by calling, or by thy own procuring? for that thou wouldst travail in God’s gospel, or that thou wouldst be richly arrayed? Answer now to thine own conscience, as thou wouldst answer to God.”²

Without presuming to pass judgment on individuals, or on religious communities—for to their own Master they must stand or fall—the author desires to plead only for such ministry, under whatever denomination or circumstances it may be found, as proceeds from a divine call, and is exercised under the fresh sense of that duty or “necessity,”³ which the Apostle Paul felt to be laid upon him to preach the gospel. By whatever instruments and under whatever circumstances this living gospel ministry is exercised, he desires its encouragement, and humbly rejoices in greeting it with the salutation of “God speed!”

Though not essential to the main question, the qualification and call of Christian women for the work of the gospel ministry, and their exercise of such a vocation, are closely connected with the subject. In the Old Testament, as well as in the New, instances are recorded, of eminent females who were largely endued with spiritual gifts, and who exercised them publicly for the good of others. Such were Miriam, Deborah and Huldah; Elizabeth, Mary and Anna; with others “whose names are” declared to be “in the book of life.”⁴

Among the blessings predicted in early ages of the world, to be bestowed upon the Christian church, a larger and more general diffusion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit appears to have

¹ Gilpin’s Life—“ Why many priests have no benefices.”

² Fox’s Acts and Mon. vol. i. ³ 1 Cor. ix. 16. ⁴ Phil. iv. 3.

been prominent. And on the day of Pentecost, we find the Apostle Peter thus testifying to the fulfilment of one of these predictions, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and on my servants, and on my handmaidens, I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy."¹ The expression of "the last days" clearly refers to the gospel dispensation, which is to continue to the end of time,—being the one everlasting covenant between God and his people. Thus the Prophet Isaiah declares, "This is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever."²

The visitations and gifts of the Holy Spirit, though often different in measure and in character, being extended through the gospel day to the various classes, ages and sexes; and "male and female, bond and free," being "all one in Christ Jesus,"³ it clearly follows that women, as well as men, may be rightly called to the sacred work of the ministry. Such was the case in the apostolic age; and Paul, while he forbade women to talk, converse or ask questions in the church, gave directions with respect to the covering of the head when they were engaged in prayer, and in prophecy or ministry.⁴ Several instances are also referred to by the sacred writers, of women who "prophesied," and by the same apostle, of others who "laboured with" him "in the gospel";⁵ so that we cannot doubt that, in that pure period of the Christian church, this practice was fully recognised and encouraged; and that it is a pattern to be followed in the present day by such as receive the needful qualification by the Holy Spirit. This question demands the deep and serious consideration of professing Christians.

Through the prohibition of the exercise of this spiritual gift by females, much loss appears to have been sustained by the Christian churches, in respect both to public and social minis-

¹ Acts ii. 16-18.

² Isaiah lix. 21.

³ Gal. iii. 38.

⁴ 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35; xi. 4, 5.

⁵ Acts xxi. 9; Phil. iv. 3.

trations, and to the religious character and weight of the sex. No good reason exists for supposing that their calling to this dignified service was, like the power to work miracles, limited to the first age of the church; for if all are one in Christ Jesus, why should we set bounds to the gifts and calling of God, and thus at once exclude from the public work of evangelization one half of his rational creatures? Many of them he has endued in a remarkable manner, from age to age, with ability and willingness to speak well of the name of Christ; and with great persuasiveness, authority and effect to advocate his holy cause. This too has been accomplished, without subtracting any portion from that true modesty which is the great ornament of woman; on the contrary, it has tended to an elevation and benignity of character, both graceful and eminently useful to religious and civil society.

That these views prevailed before the general breaking forth of the Reformation, is proved by many witnesses. The Montanists had been noted at an early period for allowing this liberty, and it is said to have been common among the sects termed heretics,¹ constituting probably one of the grounds of this degrading appellation. Pope Martyn, in 1440, issued a general order, that all suspected persons should be examined, whether they believed it "lawful for any lay persons, whether men or women, to preach the gospel:"² thus showing the prevalence of such a sentiment.

Among many by whom it was held, John Lambert, an English reformer, being asked at his examination, in 1538, the same question, answered thus:—"In my opinion it is meet for none to preach openly the word of God, except they be chosen and elect thereto, either by God, or solemnly by men, or both. Yet I say that, in time of great necessity, lay people, both men and women may preach; as the apostle speaks in writing to the Corinthians, of women praying and prophesying. To this accords the prophesy of Joel, 'I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh,' &c. Thus also did Anna the prophetess, and the Virgin Mary give thanks unto God."³

Hauger, a Norwegian reformer of very spiritual views, to-

¹ Bingham's Christian Antiquities, xiv. 4, 5. ² Fox's Acts and Mon. vol. i.

³ Fox's Acts and Mon. vol. ii.

wards the close of the last century, maintained that all who felt an inward call, including women, were entitled to preach.¹ The Duhobortzi, a numerous body of Christians in Russia, act on the same opinion, and allow the ministry of females, asking, as a reason for it, whether women have not enlightened understandings as well as men.²

George Benson, Bishop Pearse, John Locke, and Adam Clarke, in their notes on the first Epistle to the Corinthians, all maintain that the call of women to public prayer and to the ministry of the word is clearly deducible from the Apostle Paul's remarks, in the eleventh and fourteenth chapters. In the ancient Jewish synagogues, the hearers were allowed to ask questions for information; but the adoption of this practice by females in the Christian church was forbidden by the apostle, as tending to confusion.³

The Deaconesses of the ancient church were recognised as a distinct spiritual class; and whether their example have any bearing or not on the present subject, they may with propriety be referred to here. They were sometimes called "widows," being usually chosen from such; at other times they were known as "female elders or presbyters." None were admitted as deaconesses, in some churches, under forty years of age; in others, fifty or sixty was the age prescribed. Phebe, mentioned in the Epistle to the Romans chap. xvi. as "a servant or deacon of the church (in the old translation, 'a minister of the congregation', at Cenchrea," is considered by some to have been of this number; and they appear to have existed as a class from the Apostolic age. They were looked upon as the female part of the clergy, and were appointed or ordained in the same manner as men, by the imposition of hands. The prayer used on the occasion, and quoted in that ancient work, the feigned Apostolic Constitutions, concludes thus—"Look down also upon this thy handmaid, and bestow on her the Holy Ghost, that she may worthily perform the work committed to her, to thy honour and to the glory of Christ." They were not permitted to officiate as priests, except among some of the Montanists. Indeed great jealousy evidently prevailed, lest they should trench on the privileges and duties of the male

¹ Forrester's Norway.

² Pinkerton's Greek Church.

³ Fox's Acts and Mon. vol ii.

officers of the church. An ancient writer terms their service the “private ministry of the word.” It was chiefly confined to their own sex, whom they assisted in the rite of water baptism, in administering unction, and in previously catechising and instructing female converts. They also visited women who were sick or distressed, ministered to the wants of the prisoners and martyrs, attended the women’s gate of the places of worship, and generally presided over their own sex: when exaggerated notions of the dignity of the clerical order began to prevail, offence was taken against the practice of ordaining deaconesses. They subsisted, however, in the Greek church till the latter end of the twelfth century, but in the Latin churches were generally discontinued at earlier periods.¹

Numerous instances of eminent Christian women, in different ages and countries, might be adduced both from inspired and uninspired history, in proof of the value of their services in the cause of Christ. Many females of various denominations, some with the pen, and others with hallowed lips, have pleaded “for the faith once delivered to the saints,”² and the successful result of their devotedness has shown that their labours have not been in vain in the Lord. Not less than fifty-five faithful and devoted women are recorded to have been burned in the reign of Queen Mary, being about one-fifth of the whole number, who preferred Christian principle to life itself. The pious wives of missionaries have often rendered valuable services to the infant churches in heathen lands, and contributed largely to build them up in the faith of the gospel.

Religious females might, it is believed, with great advantage be encouraged to take a more active part in the dissemination of gospel truths, both at home and abroad, as the Lord may influence their hearts, and qualify them for the work. How much more consistent with Christian duty are engagements of this kind, and duties of active benevolence, than seclusion in professedly religious houses, there to languish and pine away in unnatural celibacy and listlessness, or than the waste of their time and energies in frivolous dissipation! For every talent which the great Head of the church has bestowed on each, whether male or female, as well as for every impediment thrown in the way of its right occupation, he will surely require an account hereafter!

¹ Neander’s History—Bingham’s Christian Antiquities. ² Jude iii.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MINISTERS AND OTHER SERVANTS OF CHRIST MUST COMMEND THEIR DOCTRINES BY FORBEARING CONDUCT.

THERE is no truth more conspicuous in the New Testament, than that christianity is a religion of the heart and of the life, not merely of the tongue. If the practice set forth the beauty and purity of Christian principles, the voice will add its echo with a full effect ; without the former, it can only prove, even in its highest powers, "as the sounding brass or the tinkling cymbal."¹ The true ministers of Christ may be pronounced to be those, who, having experienced a call through the Holy Spirit, illustrate and commend, both by conduct and by language, the pure and heavenly gospel of their divine Master ; endeavouring in humility, charity and faithfulness, to fulfil the sacred trust. They must daily cherish the influence of the Holy Spirit as their guide "into all truth,"² and suffer it to be the governing principle of their lives ; not on the one hand, holding "the truth in unrighteousness,"³ making a good profession of sound doctrine, but dishonouring it in practice ; nor on the other, content with a moral life, while error of faith, deadness of affection, or unsound extreme notions operate like a canker in the heart. Man may often feel incompetent to judge of the call ; but the evidences or fruits, both as to ministry and general conduct, being of a more obvious and palpable nature, may be within the reach of his spiritual perceptions.

The means employed by the servants of Jesus Christ, whether in the ministry or in other stations, in order to promote his kingdom, are and must be of a spiritual, uncompromising, yet convincing nature, full of humility and love, like those which he himself employed when he walked among men. Their "weapons are not carnal, but mighty through God."⁴ They will be found

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 1.

² John xvi. 13.

³ Rom. i. 18.

⁴ 2 Cor. x. 4.

endeavouring "in meekness to instruct" those who are in the spirit of opposition;¹ appealing to their reason and conscience, to the testimony of Holy Scripture, and to the witness for God in the heart. They will maintain a large degree of candour and forbearance, with zeal and firmness. They will seek not their own, but the things which are Jesus Christ's,² and in the spirit and dispositions which he displayed.

The New Testament abounds with illustrations of these principles, evinced in the perfect pattern of our Lord, and in the lives and precepts of his apostles. Disclaiming every idea of force and compulsion, Jesus, the Lamb of God laid down his life for the sake of fallen, guilty man! Though Lord of all, he came in the form of a servant, but as the Prince of Peace, to conquer through suffering, to reign spiritually through temporal humiliation, and to set an example to his followers, that the cross faithfully borne is the prelude to the glorious crown. *They* gave evidences of the same unobtrusive, self-denying spirit, and were content to suffer all things that they might obtain a more glorious inheritance, and extend the kingdom of their Lord and Master. Paul made a solemn appeal to the Ephesian elders, that he had "coveted no man's silver or gold, or apparel;"³ that the labour of his hands had provided for the necessities of himself and his companions; and that he sought not the earthly substance of his hearers, but the salvation of their souls. "The servant of the Lord must not strive," said he, "but be gentle towards all men." The apostles conducted themselves, "not as lords over God's heritage, but as examples to the flock;"⁴ not as "having dominion over their faith," but, being filled with humility, forbearance and charity, as "helpers of their joy."⁵

In vain will ministers of this day profess to be their true successors, unless inheriting their holy, humble and gentle temper of mind; stedfast in the faith, but influencing by meek persuasion, "commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God,"⁶ and acting on the principle that the "wrath of man worketh not His righteousness."⁷ This would keep down all ecclesiastical usurpation over the people, whether in established or in voluntary churches, and produce a healthful unity of interest and action. The professed ministers of

Tim. ii. 25.

² Phil. ii.

³ Acts xx.

⁴ 1 Peter v. 3.

Cor. i. 24.

⁵ 2 Cor. iv.

⁶ James i. 20.

Christ are bound often to consider what is the nature of the influence, which by example, as well as by doctrine, they are really commanding to the people. Whether they are, like the apostles of old, “ministering the spirit,”¹ “the gospel of God,”² or “grace to the hearers,”³ both publicly and privately; or whether, on the other hand, through their own worldly-mindedness, they are ministering to the self-love, the pride and the other evil tendencies of the unregenerate heart.

The necessity of forbearance, and the evils of a contrary spirit, are clearly set forth by Locke. In one of his letters on toleration, he says, “This duty requires from ecclesiastics that they deprive not other men which are not of their church and faith, either of liberty or any part of their worldly goods, on account of difference in religion. It is not enough for them to abstain from violence and rapine and all manner of persecution. He that pretends to be a successor of the apostles, and takes upon him the office of teaching, is obliged also to admonish his hearers of the duties of peace and goodwill towards all men, and diligently to endeavour to allay and temper all that heat and unreasonable averseness of mind, which any man’s fiery zeal for his own sect or which the craft of others has kindled against” those who differ.

How greatly are the labours of faithful missionaries frustrated among the heathen, by the ill conduct towards them of professing Christians, both nationally and individually! In vain do we attempt to convert them to a religion, the general fruits of which, in their experience, are pride, avarice and oppression! One war nullifies in the sight of a whole nation the effects of all the Bible and missionary institutions. The Christian who leads a holy beneficent life among them is an effective missionary, whether he preach or be silent; for nothing wins so powerfully as consistency, kindness and disinterestedness!

¹ Gal. iii. 5.

² Rom. xv. 16.

³ Ephes. iv. 29.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH ; ITS ADOPTION AND UNION WITH THE STATE BY THE EMPEROR CONSTANTINE.

THE primitive Christians, having been called out of the spirit and motives of the world, were a distinct and separate people, neither possessing nor striving to obtain secular support. On the contrary, they were exposed to the hostility of those around them and were outwardly defenceless, if the Roman emperors or governors chose to persecute them. Their reliance was on a power and a wisdom superior to those of man; and believing that “the friendship of the world” was “enmity with God,”¹ they carefully withheld and rejected its influence, in submission to the restraining spirit of Christ.

The apostles and early ministers went forth teaching, and preaching the kingdom of God. They disclaimed dominion over the faith one of another, and the craft of worldly policy; publishing the gospel freely, and not ashamed to provide by labour for their own necessities; yet when occasions required, feeling at liberty to accept the bounty of their fellow believers, and to appeal to their gratitude and generosity : “If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?”² Primitive christianity was propagated, not by the arm of temporal power, nor by the aid of wealth or human learning, but by the virtue of the Holy Spirit directing and blessing the instrumentality of those humble and faithful men. They considered religion as a personal concern between each man and his Maker, a matter of individual judgment, faith and conscience, which excluded all coercive interference of others. They were instructed to use the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit.³ The doctrine of compulsion was, as a means of promoting pure

¹ James iv. 4.

² 1 Cor. ix. 11.

³ Eph. vi. 14.

and undefiled religion, wholly unknown to them, and belonged to another, a lower and a worldly system.

At the same time strong intimations were given by the apostles, of the corruptions which should afterwards arise in the church. Thus Paul tells the elders of Ephesus, "I know that after my departure grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock."¹ And to others Peter predicts, "Through covetousness, they shall with feigned words make merchandise of you."²

The primitive believers acknowledged no man to be head of the church. Christ himself, the stone rejected by the builders of this world, was the foundation and headstone of their spiritual house: neither established nor cemented by worldly authority and considerations, it was founded on a basis more stable than that of human policy or power, and its objects were far superior to those of political or civil institutions.

Great were the persecutions which the early Christians suffered from several of the Roman emperors. These however could not totally suppress the truth, though they tended to check its apparent progress. "The blood of the martyrs" proved indeed, in various ages, "the seed of the church;" so adapted is the influence of adversity to lay low the natural pride of man, and to foster the growth of vital religion. The favour and privileges granted to the Christians by other emperors, though hailed thankfully as a great relief to their temporal condition, did not prove equally conducive to their advancement in humility, faith and holiness.

Very soon after the times of the apostles, the declension, which had been foretold, began gradually to creep in; the ministers and bishops usurped the authority which the church at large had been accustomed to exercise; superstition took the place of true devotion; and the profession of christianity became by degrees greatly debased, both in faith and practice. Jewish notions on the one hand, and those of various sects of heathen philosophy on the other, obtained a strong hold, and led to corruptions and divisions. Vain traditions, fabulous stories and pretended miracles found a ready acceptance, and at length the holiest offices were mostly filled with ignorant, designing, and covetous ecclesiastics. The people, "having itching ears,

¹ Acts xx. 29.

² 2 Peter ii. 3.

heaped to themselves teachers,"¹ who gradually exchanged the simplicity and lowness of the carpenter and the fisherman for the pretensions of the *Rabbies*, or the oratory and casuistry of the philosophers, and arrogated to themselves independence and lordship.

Constantine the Great obtained the full possession of the throne in the year 324; and his measures have proved, in many respects, more injurious to the cause of christianity than those of any emperor that preceded him. He gave early indications of a desire to protect and favour the Christians, which, after their many severe afflictions, they naturally accepted in the most grateful manner; and for a time he granted to all his subjects, whether Christians or heathens, the full possession of religious liberty. At length, embracing the profession of the new religion, he became extremely zealous in his endeavours to promote it. With this object in view, he lost sight of the liberality which he had before evinced; and being impressed with the folly, superstition and impiety of heathenism, he employed at first earnest exhortations, and afterwards all the force of his imperial authority, to induce his subjects to forsake the ancient worship and to adopt the Christian faith. He greatly encouraged the augmentation of the church revenues, and enacted a law, that any one might bequeath what part of his goods he pleased to the holy catholic church. Through the avarice of the clergy, this law soon led to great abuses, and many poor heirs were defrauded of their just rights. Constantine also settled upon the ministers a standing annual allowance out of the public treasury, and is said to have allotted to them a regular supply of corn from the granaries of the state in each city.²

Thus christianity was established as the religion of the empire, about the year 328; and its profession acquired all the protection and advantages which secular power could bestow; furnishing to after ages an example of the union of political and religious authority, which they have been but too ready to imitate, and which constitutes the main subject considered in this treatise.³

Bishop Newton remarks, that "Constantine's protection and favour of the Christian church contributed little to the spiritual

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 3.

² Bingham's Christian Antiquities.

³ Ecclesiastical Historians generally.

graces and virtues of Christians, though it added much to their temporal prosperity. It enlarged their revenues, and increased their endowments, but proved the fatal means of corrupting the doctrine and relaxing the discipline of the church. It was attended with this peculiar disadvantage, that many clave to them with flatteries, becoming Christians for the sake of the loaves and the fishes, and pretending to be of that religion, only because it was the religion of the emperor. Eusebius,¹ who was a contemporary writer, reckons that one of the reigning vices of the time was the dissimulation and hypocrisy of men, fraudulently entering into the church and borrowing the name of Christians without the reality.²

"The Christian church had at first," says D'Aubignè, "like the azure river, a separate existence, a development of her own, and she was then comparatively pure. But, in the beginning of the fourth century, the half-pagan state became united to her, and this junction immediately threw into the heavenly blue of the church those muddy waters which deform her beauty. If you give political society a power over her, the evil becomes alarming. She will thenceforth have two principles of development, and be subjected to two contrary influences. How can such a society prosper?"³

Persecution by the power of the state quickly followed this union as a natural consequence, and was still in its character and effects an evil engine; though now it was professed, through mistaken views, to be used in favour of christianity, while formerly it had been avowedly employed as a means of suppressing it. The zeal of Constantine on behalf of his newly adopted faith increased with years, and he issued several severe edicts for the forcible demolition of heathen altars, and for the prevention of their sacrifices and devotions. On the other hand, embracing with earnestness the superstitious notions and rites introduced into the church, he established or sanctioned various forms in public worship. Next, he proceeded to extirpate error and heresy, commanding all his subjects, who withdrew and worshipped separately, on pain of the destruction of their places for religious meeting and the confiscation of their property, to return to the authorised modes. These intolerant and unchristian

¹ Life of Constantine, iv. 54.

² Dissertation 17, part ii.

³ England Scotland and Ireland.

acts were among the first fruits of that unhallowed union, by which an emperor, whose claim to the possession of true christianity is very doubtful, became, nevertheless, the ostensible head of the church. Its bishops and ministers had already, during the preceding period, gradually encroached on the privileges and functions of the members at large, creating themselves so many spiritual lords. The infusion of the influence and wealth of the state, while it flattered and strengthened this ecclesiastical usurpation, proved the introduction of a new and foreign principle, incompatible with the spiritual genius of christianity, and combating for lordship over the mind and conscience of the professing church.

Most of the historians of Constantine pass high encomiums on his many Christian virtues, because he honoured their profession of religion with worldly power and privileges, advanced certain individuals to great distinction, and favoured the particular views which they entertained.

There were however in that church many strong and fearless voices, that declared plainly to the succeeding emperor that, whilst he was endeavouring by outward power to further christianity, he was injuring rather than aiding it—voices which set forth to the pseudo-christian ruler, who was confounding political with Christian views, the principles of freedom of conscience and of faith, as they had been held by the first advocates of christianity. Thus Hilary exclaimed, “With the gold of the state thou cloggest the sanctuary of God, obtruding upon Him what has been torn from the temples, or obtained by confiscation, or exacted by fines.” Athanasius well remarked of the application of force to religion, “It is a proof that they have no confidence in their own faith, if they apply compulsion and constrain men against their will; thus Satan, because there is no truth in him, breaks in with axe and sword, where he finds admission. But the Saviour is so mild, that he truly teaches thus, “If any man *will* follow me,” “he who *will* be my disciple,” &c., compelling no one to whom he comes, but knocking at the door of the soul, and saying, “open to me my sister.” Jesus Christ compelled no one, when he pathetically said to his disciples, “Will ye also go away?”¹

No circumstance in the ecclesiastical proceedings of those

¹ Neander's History, vol. ii.

ages appears to have been more injurious, than this union of temporal and spiritual power, in its insidious effects on the profession of the Christian religion, from that time downward. The history of those effects, during the reign of Constantine alone, affords a memorable example of the fatal consequences of this attempted union ; and may be appealed to as a fair instance of its legitimate fruits. The expression, though a strong one, is used by some writers, that “Constantine claimed and exercised the power, and thus usurped the throne and the prerogative, of God.” He frequently asserted that the care of the church was committed to him from heaven ; and the obsequious conduct of most of the bishops and ministers proves that they believed or at least encouraged the assertion. Thus persecuting and anti-christian practices were introduced. The ecclesiastics, already secularised in spirit and aspiring to worldly pre-eminence, eagerly sought his esteem and favour ; bartering their religious independence and conscientious integrity for the honours and privileges which imperial greatness could bestow ; while the idolatrous priests flocked to the standard of the cross, equally earnest to share in the offices and favours of the new profession.

Constantine found the church an independent body ; he received it into strict alliance with the state, constituting himself its director and guardian, and combining in his own person the highest ecclesiastical with the highest civil authority.¹ As head of the church he became the judge of heresy ; being the first who summoned general ecclesiastical councils and presided in them ; he issued edicts, and published rescripts—not, as formerly, to assure his subjects of religious liberty and impartial protection, but to denounce differences of religious opinion, and to threaten with severe punishments those who did not accord with his own views of orthodoxy.

“ Christianity having become the state religion,” says Neander, “the clergy received the same favour from Constantine as the heathen priests had formerly enjoyed, and he decreed that they should be exempted from all burdens of the state. The consequence was, that many, without any inward call or qualification for the office, were ordained as clergy, merely to procure this exemption ; by which means the worst of men came to exercise the holiest offices.”²

¹ Waddington’s History.

² History of Church, vol. ii.

The injury thus inflicted on the cause of christianity, was in an after age well characterized by Lord Cobham, a British nobleman illustrious as an ardent reformer, who united a high spirit and uncommon parts and acquirements, with an authority and dignity which showed him to be the great man, under all his afflictions. Having spoken at his examination of the “venom” which had been infused into the church, he was desired to explain the expression, “I mean by it,” said he, “the wealth of the church ! When the church was first endowed, as an author of your own pathetically expresses it, an angel in the air cried out, ‘Woe ! woe ! woe ! This day is venom shed into the church of God !’ Since that time, instead of laying down their lives for religion, as in the early ages, the bishops of Rome have been engaged in a constant scene of persecution, or in cursing, murdering, or fighting with each other.”¹

The circumstance here alluded to is noticed by some historians. The same sentiment and mode of expression in reference to Constantine, were used by several of the early reformers, who looked on him as the chief or first corrupter of the purity and simplicity of the church. Thus, a Polish hymn, written about 1450 in honour of Wicliffe, has these words, “Sylvester, the first Pope, derived his power from the dragon Constantine, and diffused his venom over all the churches.”²

Constantine died in the year 336, having enjoyed great honour ; and his memory was highly eulogized by prelates and historians whom he had advanced to dignity.

The professing Christian church had now acquired a large degree of secular greatness; but it is only too apparent that it had sacrificed, in a still larger degree, its genuine character and spiritual vitality. It may indeed be asserted, that true religion, finding little place amid the honours and luxuries of courts and palaces, retreated unperceived from contact and union with worldly grandeur, into the wilderness, the humble recesses of private life, and the retreats of unprivileged devotion ; leaving a large proportion of nominal Christians wilfully blinded as to their own condition and loss.

¹ Gilpin’s Life of Lord Cobham.

² Reformation in Europe.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PRACTICAL ILL CONSEQUENCES OF PECUNIARY ENDOWMENTS ON THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY AND CHURCHES.

AN endowment for Christian ministers, if it be of moderate amount, may appear on first consideration, to be a harmless thing, and even productive of advantage, by rendering them respectable, capable of acts of charity, and independent of their hearers. But, besides the objection to all pecuniary compensation—which will be considered in another chapter—a ministerial endowment, however small, is attended with this obvious and serious evil:—that it tends to convert the exercise of a spiritual gift, duty and calling, into *a property*, to be bought or sold, by simoniacal bargain and transfer, in some degree like lands or goods. Instead of a sacred Christian requirement, a religious exercise to be undertaken from pure and disinterested motives, the ministry of the gospel thus becomes a coveted source of ascertained income. Through the operation of the system of patronage, every such office is vested in a certain individual or body, and constitutes a negotiable property, to be obtained by favour or influence with the great, and converted into a means of livelihood and personal aggrandisement. By the admission of the endowment principle,—by the first inlet of the specious provision, however small in extent,—the most holy office in the Lord's house is rendered venal, and its pure spiritual character is in danger of being lost. Thus the ministry becoming a system of buying and selling, may be, and too often is, adulterated and polluted. Hence also originate constrained obedience and compulsory payments; and the resort to the arm of civil power, to uphold the claims of the church.

The spirit of Judas deeply insinuates itself into the keepers of the bag, originally provided for the poor of the flock. For it must be borne carefully in mind, that the great and only purpose which the primitive Christian church had in view, in

accepting the donations of its members, was to provide for the necessities of the poor. These, and not the ministers, were the objects of its endowments and care : poverty and not service was the recommendation to its bounty. If any ministers were relieved, it was not because they were such, but because they wanted other means of support ; and it was commanded that "if any would not work, neither should they eat." But this great original purpose of charity was gradually invaded and lost sight of. The ecclesiastics robbed the poor and pampered themselves with the spoil—a wrong which the reformation hitherto has not fully repaired, by restoring the property to its original objects. There is even some reason to fear that it has aggravated this part of the evil, by breaking up the religious houses, whose chief redeeming feature, in the midst of great error, was their hospitality and attention to the indigent; the care of these not being provided for by the reformed churches.

Wicliffe considered ministerial endowments to be the root of all the corruption among the clergy. He often lamented the luxury they occasioned, and used to wish that the church was reduced to its pristine poverty and innocence. He said of the monks and friars of his day, that they made property of ghostly goods, where no property may be ; and professed to have no property in worldly goods, where alone property is lawful.¹ He asserted that "there is no greater heretic or Antichrist, than that clerk, which teacheth that it is lawful for priests and Levites of the law of grace to be endued with temporal possessions."

The *evil* of endowments consists chiefly in their application to the pecuniary support of the *ministry*. For promoting education, for relieving the indigent, and for other charitable objects, their aid is often valuable. But if they once become settled or applied as ministerial stipends, the mischief is incalculable, by their conversion into a species of property, encouraging the simoniacal exchange of so much money for so much spiritual service ; than which no one corruption is more full of danger to the well-being of a church and its ministers. Even for charitable objects endowments are very liable to be abused and misapplied, to demoralize the receivers, to discourage the exertions of private bounty, and to render some of the finest offices of humanity cold and unfeeling acts. A lively and watchful interest is often best maintained, in

¹ Myers and Gilpin's Lives.

objects which appeal to spontaneous benevolence alone, and which are conducted from time to time, according to the changing requirements of human society and affairs. Abundant are the examples which might be adduced, to show that even well regulated endowments may be subjected to restrictions and rules suited to one time, which may in another generation be found very ill adapted to the altered necessities of the people, and thus be cramped and impaired in usefulness.

Smith in his "Wealth of Nations," prosecutes an inquiry, whether the public endowments, even for schools and colleges, have contributed, in general, to promote the end of their institution; whether they have encouraged the diligence and improved the abilities of the teachers; whether they have directed the course of education towards more useful objects? To this inquiry he thinks it not difficult to give at least a probable answer, and that answer is decidedly in the negative, as proved by investigating the effects observable.¹

If this be true as respects foundations for educational or charitable purposes, how much more powerfully are the same evils likely to arise from endowments for spiritual services! What corruption of motives, what coldness of heart, what deficiency of zeal, what laxity of attention, what inertness and pride are in danger of being thus introduced, to the degradation of the ministerial character, the loss of the spiritual efficiency, and the incalculable injury of religion. Do not the command and the promise apply to richly endowed churches, as well as to the rich young man formerly? "Sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come follow me."²

But, apart from all considerations of expediency, and on incomparably higher ground, the Christian churches have the plain instructions and example of our Lord and his Apostles for their guide in this matter, if they listen, without prejudice and covetousness, to their wholesome, simple teaching. The whole tenor and spirit of the New Testament are utterly opposed to the system, which makes the ministry of the gospel a trade to live by.

"The clergy of an established and well endowed religion," says Smith, "frequently become men of learning and eloquence,

¹ Book v. chap. 1.

² Matt. xix. 21.

but they are apt gradually to lose the qualities, which gave them authority and influence with the people, and they have commonly no other resource on an emergency, than to call upon the civil magistrate to persecute, destroy or drive out their adversaries.”¹

The objection to endowments would still exist in full force, if the ministers of all the different denominations partook of them. The evil in fact would be only increased. Where would such a course terminate? Shall we endow the Catholic priest, the Unitarian minister, the Jewish rabbi, as is done in some continental countries, and to some extent in the British colonies? Or on the contrary, ought we not to withhold state endowments altogether, and leave what may be required for their own ministers and services, to the spontaneous efforts of the respective churches?

Very plainly does Milton answer those, who contended that, if endowments should be abolished, the light of the gospel would soon be extinguished. “Most of all,” says he, “are they to be shamed, who cry out with the distinct voice of notorious hirelings, ‘If ye settle not our maintenance by law, farewell the gospel!’ Than which nothing can be uttered more false, more ignominious, and, I may say, more blasphemous against our Saviour; who hath promised, without this condition, both his Holy Spirit and his own presence with his church to the world’s end.”²

“No sooner,” says a modern writer, “did riches and honours, Satan’s last and most prevailing temptations, flow in upon the church, than christianity began to wear another aspect; the hitherto inflexible spirit of its professors gradually softened into a conformity to this world, and Christian simplicity gave way to earthly policy. Henceforward was to be seen great striving among ecclesiastics for the highest dignities and richest preferments, and much contention about precedence and jurisdiction. The disciple now wanted to be above his master, and the servant above his Lord. Nay, Christ’s pretended vicar began to aspire at supreme sovereignty over princes, and to set the foot of church power upon the neck of royalty.

“Under the declension of christianity in spirit and power, the outward visible church, conscious that the Divine pre-

¹ Book v. chap. 1.

² Considerations on Hirelings.

sence was departed from her, and that she was no longer in general that pure, chaste, heavenly spouse of Christ, all glorious in gifts as before, began to deck herself in all the painted and pompous ornaments of a glistening outside worship. Magnificent temples, with much imagery and sculpture, were erected and beautified with all that man's art and device could project and execute. Costly vestments, gilded furniture, crosses of gold and silver, decorated with precious stones, stately wax candles, &c., were introduced; as well to feed the pride of man, as to make a sanctimonious show and supply the want of the true riches."¹

The especial attention of the reader is invited to the corrupt consequences, naturally flowing from the admission of this one specious principle of endowments, more subversive perhaps of true christianity, than any of the other errors which invaded the church during the dark ages; the confident hope must nevertheless be cherished that, through the divine blessing on clear manifestations of the truth, and on enlightened Christian efforts, this reproach and stumbling block will yet be rolled away from the threshold of Christendom.

¹ From preface to Sermons, &c., by T. Hartley, Northamptonshire, 1755.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY MUST BE FREE; BUT THOSE WHO
PREACH THE GOSPEL ARE AUTHORISED TO LIVE OF THE
GOSPEL.

WHEN our Lord sent forth his disciples to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation, among the few commands which he is recorded to have given them, none is more prominent than this: “Freely (or gratuitously) ye have received, freely (or gratuitously) give”¹ or communicate. So that whether they preached the gospel, or healed the sick, or cleansed lepers, or cast out devils, or raised the dead, they were to do all without charge or pecuniary contract.

But he also commanded them to provide neither money, nor victuals, nor change of garments; declaring that “the labourer is worthy of his meat or hire.”² If it should be objected, from the use of this term, that Christ encouraged a hired or hireling ministry, it may be remembered that the words immediately preceding sufficiently explain his meaning,—“Eating, and drinking such things as they give.”³ These expressions and the context plainly show the spontaneous return, which alone he permitted to be accepted; while, in another place, he describes the emolument and the great object of the service to be of a very different nature.—“He that reapeth receiveth wages and gathereth fruit unto life eternal.”⁴

Those who received “spiritual things” from the gospel messengers, were exhorted not to be backward in supplying them with “carnal things,” on the same principle as the Gentiles were urged to supply the “wants of the poor saints at Jerusalem;” not as a fixed impost to satisfy covetousness, but, “as a matter of bounty” to relieve all real “necessities.” Our Lord’s declaration, that he sent forth his messengers “as sheep in the midst of wolves,” plainly inculcates the disposition suited to the work; for though they were to be “wise as serpents,” yet they

¹ Matt. x. 8. ² Matt. x. 10; Luke x. 7. ³ Luke x. 7. ⁴ John iv. 36.

were at the same time commanded to be "harmless as doves."¹ If any should refuse to receive or to hear them, they were merely to shake off the dust of their feet, and to state that they did so as a testimony against such. He gave them no authority to arrest or to prosecute, to compel or to levy; but if they should be persecuted in one city, they were to flee into another.

The apostle Paul declared it to be an ordinance of the Lord, "that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel,"² yet he declined the exercise of "this power," and did not disdain to travel on foot, and to labour with his hands for the support of himself and his coadjutors, assuring the Corinthians that he sought not theirs but them.³ The elders of Ephesus he exhorted that "so labouring they ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that it is more blessed to give than to receive."⁴ From these and other passages in the New Testament, it may be fairly presumed that Christ established a free (or gratuitous) ministry,—one which should not be entered into for the sake of pecuniary emolument, or exercised as a trade or lucrative profession, but wholly removed from such motives, and to be undertaken from higher and purer considerations; yet with a provision for support when needed, which might permit even the poor to engage in it, when called thereto, and sufficient for all, while performing the duty. Thus the Christian church would be free from the reproach pronounced by divine authority, even on that of the ancient Israelites where remuneration was allowed: "The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests teach for hire, and the prophets divine for money: yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us."⁵

In the book of Acts is recorded a remarkable instance of one, who desired to partake of the spiritual power possessed by the apostles, and offered them money for that purpose, probably with the intention to exercise the qualification as a means of pecuniary profit. But strong and decisive was the rebuke addressed to him by Peter, for entertaining an idea so inconsistent with the whole tenor of the gospel: "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in

¹ Matt. x. 16.

² 1 Cor. ix. 14.

³ 2 Cor. xii. 14.

⁴ Acts xx. 35.

⁵ Micah iii. 11.

this matter, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity! ”¹

What can be more clear than this instance of the utter contrariety, in the judgment of the apostle, between the communication of the gifts of the Spirit on the one hand, and the endeavour on the other to make a gain by such means, to convert them into a source of livelihood and emolument? Though this circumstance is often spoken of, yet the lesson which it conveys is too little regarded by the professors and ministers of christianity, and not suffered to operate as an awful warning against every such motive and practice; so that there is still danger lest the language again go forth, you have “neither part nor lot in the matter.” How earnest was the apostle Paul, that they who fill the sacred offices in the church should “not be covetous,” or “greedy of filthy lucre;” but “sober, just, holy, temperate;” and that believers generally, having food and raiment, should be therewith content!² To bring the people into bondage, to devour them, to take of them, he denounced as signs of “false apostles, deceitful workers!”³

From the foregoing, and other passages to the same effect, it may be plainly inferred that the ministry must be undertaken only from a sense of religious duty, and a Christian concern for the salvation of the souls of men. “Necessity is laid upon me;” said the Apostle to the Gentiles, “yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel;”⁴ and further, “When it pleased God, who called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood,”⁵ &c. A liberty is doubtless at the same time granted to such, to accept the necessaries, of life which are freely offered to them while thus engaged. But if the motive to enter upon this high calling be mercenary, if the desire be to make a gain of godliness⁶ with the view formerly expressed, “Put me I pray thee into one of the priests’ offices, that I may eat a piece of bread;”⁷ lamentable indeed is the degradation, and spiritually destructive may be the effects,

¹ Acts viii. 20, 23.

² Gal. i. 16.

² Titus i. 7, 8.

⁴ 1 Tim. vi. 5.

³ 2 Cor. xi. 13.

⁵ 1 Sam. ii. 36.

¹ Cor. ix. 16.

not only to the individual himself, but to those also who are the objects of his ministrations.

Even the system of paying missionaries, for spiritual labours among the heathen, well deserves serious consideration; since it furnishes a precedent to these poor people, which may be very injurious to their future interests, both spiritual and temporal. If such labourers—highly gifted, devoted, and zealous as many of them are—would place themselves more on a level with the simple natives among whom they reside, and regard them as brethren, being content to labour towards their own maintenance, they would more fully conform to apostolic example, and produce a better influence and effect, by affording patterns of greater disinterestedness and self-denial. But, alas! how can great success be expected among uncivilized tribes from the labours of the missionaries, while the general behaviour of Christians affords the people a ready answer to the strongest appeals of these labourers. When the ministers are maintained in ease, without labour for temporals, and hold the rank of spiritual and secular rulers among the people, there is great danger of their departing from the spirit of gospel moderation, and adopting a worldly ambitious system of aggrandizement, relying entirely on the labours of others,—proceedings which are not likely to commend them or their doctrine to the hearts and consciences of their hearers.

If worldly occupations have their evils, the want of occupation has its evils and snares also. Moderate secular employment creates sympathy with those who have to toil, gives a useful knowledge of the affairs of common life, and keeps the mind as well as the body in a healthy tone.

Were there more of a disposition generally among ministers of religion, “having food and raiment, therewith to be content,¹ to cultivate a trustful reliance on the goodness and care of divine providence, to be satisfied with small things and lowliness of station, setting examples to the churches of moderation and contentment; there can be no doubt that “He who watches over “the lilies of the field,” and whose are “the cattle upon a thousand hills,” would, from time to time, sufficiently provide for their real necessities. Rich endowments and emoluments have an evident tendency to counteract this exercise of lively

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 8.

faith and humble dependence, and to produce incalculable evils.

In many places of protestant worship, great pains are taken, and various modes resorted to, to raise an income for the ministers. The houses, instead of being free for all, are to a large extent divided into pews, which are let at certain rents; the collections are frequent and heavy, and the regular payments from members are rigidly claimed. When will ministerial services be rendered freely "without money and without price," from the sole love of God and of his holy cause? Even the popish churches are much more free from distinctions between the rich and the poor, notwithstanding their many pecuniary exactions. Money, money, money, is too much the object, and that almost everywhere! -

And truly it is not ministers only, but the professing churches at large, that have suffered declension and loss in this respect, by setting an undue value upon temporal possessions and making them the object of eager pursuit; while the things that belong to another world are in danger of obtaining only a secondary place in the thoughts and affections!

Yet how can we be sufficiently grateful to the great Head of the church, who deigns to stoop to man's low and degenerate state, to compassionate our many errors, and to grant his blessing at times on feeble ministrations, and on sincere though weak endeavours to advocate his cause! Or how can we be enough on the watch against a distrustful mind, and presumption on the divine forbearance; lest it be said of us, as of certain prophets of old, "I sent them not, nor commanded them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord!"¹

Wicliff maintained that "every man is a priest, and that we need no other priest to be a mean; also that no man may be hired to pray" for another. He zealously denounced the worldly greatness and wealth of ministers of religion, recommending simplicity, poverty and disinterestedness, as essential qualifications for preachers of the gospel.

It was one of the doctrines held also by William Tyndal, that no man might be hired to pray. "To pray for one another,"

¹ Jer. xxiii. 32.

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he says, “we are equally bound ; and to pray is a thing that we may always do, whatsoever we have in hand. No man may hire another to do it ; Christ’s blood hath hired us already.¹ In these views others of the Reformers united.

Several interesting movements to encourage a gospel ministry free in every sense of the word, are in progress at the present time in various parts of England, as well as on the continent of Europe. May their promoters keep under the Christian spirit of meekness and charity, while they pursue the object with zeal and devotedness. And may the period soon arrive, through the blessing of the Most High, when the ministers of religion in every Christian community shall be able, without self-condemnation, to adopt the inviting language of the evangelical prophet speaking in the name of the Lord :—“ Ho ! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters ; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat ; yea come, buy wine and milk without money and without price ! Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not ? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto me, hear and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.”²

¹ Fox’s *Acts and Mon.*

² *Isaiah lv. 1, 2, 3.*

CHAPTER XX.

ON TITHES: THEIR ORIGIN, HISTORY AND CHANGES, THE TESTIMONIES AGAINST THEM, &c.

OF all the endowments and revenues of professed Christian churches, those in the East excepted, tithes have generally constituted the principal part. Some account of them, therefore, and especially of their introduction in the dark ages, becomes necessary in this treatise.

1st Section.—Of Tithes before the coming of Christ.

Both reason and religion teach us that it is the duty of every individual, to appropriate some portion of his substance to the service of God, and to the benefit of his fellow-men. Hence arose, at a very early period of the world's history, frequent sacrifices, as well as consecrations of worldly goods, for the ministrations of religion and for works of charity; especially after particular occasions, in which divine mercy and protection had been eminently witnessed. No claim for tithe, or an exact tenth part of produce, profit or income, is to be deduced from the law of nature; nor is there any moral or universal reason for contributing that or any other specific proportion. Religious and charitable objects being many and various, and none of them possessing an inherent or absolute claim for support, to the exclusion of others; all such objects are to be conscientiously estimated by each individual, in order to guide his own contributions.

Sacred history relates, that when Abram was returning from his victory over the four kings, Melchisedek, the king of Salem, who was the priest of the Most High God, brought forth bread and wine for him and for his young men, and blessed him; and that Abram gave him a tithe of the spoils.¹ Jacob also made a

¹ Gen. xiv. 18, 20.

vow at Bethel, that if God would be with him, would prosper him, and bring him back in peace, of all that should be given him he would give the tenth unto God.¹ These are the only notices which we have on record, of the special devotion or gift of a tenth, prior to the promulgation of the Mosaic law: the former of the two appears to have been a grateful return for the refreshments afforded, and a pious acknowledgment of divine mercy and preservation. In the second case, the sacred penman has not thought proper to relate how Jacob fulfilled his vow; but it probably was in the amount of his sacrifices and devotional offerings.

Tithes, as is well-known, were instituted by Moses, on the introduction of the legal dispensation, for the support of its sacrifices and other religious rites, and for the maintenance of the tribe of Levi; which was appointed to perform the ceremonial and sacred services. As far as appears, they constituted the chief revenues of the Jewish church, and even of the state itself.² In consequence of this provision, no land was allotted to the Levites in the general division of the territory of Canaan, when each of the other tribes had its proportionate share; the Most High declaring himself to be the portion and inheritance of the sons of Levi.³

The family of Aaron, being chosen for priests out of that tribe, were entitled to a tenth part of the tithes, also to first-ripe fruits, first-born clean beasts, and other offerings, according to the liberality of the contributors. The tithe—supposed by some to have been another—was devoted for two successive years to sacred feasts, and every third year to the poor Levites, the strangers, the fatherless and the widows.⁴ But it is worthy of special remark that, although tithes and offerings were commanded by the Mosaic law to be brought to the Levites, from a fertile soil which required little labour or cost in cultivation, yet no legal provision existed to recover them, no compulsion was authorised; and in the event of their being withheld, no outward penalty or punishment followed; but he that did not bring them was declared to have robbed God. The general principle inculcated was that of free-will offerings, and the blessing that attended generosity and dedication to the Lord's service. “Whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it an offering of the Lord.—And they came,

¹ Gen. xxviii. 20, 22.

² Deut. x. 9.

³ Joshua xviii. 7.

⁴ Selden, ii. 3; Septuagint, Deut. xxvi. 12.

every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the Lord's offering. And they spake unto Moses saying, the people bring much more than enough, and they were restrained from bringing.”¹

On the other hand, the judgments of the Lord were pronounced against those teachers whose spiritual services were rendered from covetous motives. “The priests teach for hire, and the prophets divine for money;—and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him, therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision.” Other priests, sons of Belial, said, “Nay, but thou shalt give it me now; and if not, I will take it by force.”²

The institution of tithes, being part of the law of Moses, and one of the many regulations connected with the Levitical priesthood and services, continued in force during the existence of the Jewish polity. The last we find of them is that which Josephus and Eusebius relate—that they became the cause of a violent quarrel between the high priests and the priests at Jerusalem, a little before the destruction of the city.³ On the fulfilment and conclusion of the legal dispensation by Jesus Christ—who was of the tribe of Judah and not of Levi after the flesh, but became a high priest for ever, of a new, spiritual, and higher order—all the priests and ordinances of the law were abolished, and by necessary consequence, the tithes as part of the latter. Therefore, to assert the claim of tithes now on the ground of the Jewish practice, is, as some eminent reformers have observed, to re-enact one of the ordinances or typical observances of the law, which were to continue only till the Messiah came, and amounts virtually to a denial of his coming, or is “antichristian.”⁴

“Whatever is of natural or Christian divine right,” says Paolo Sarpi, “is binding on us, but not that which is of Mosaical divine right,” as he esteems tithes to have been.⁵ Judge Blackstone observes, “A divine right certainly commenced, and, I believe, as certainly ended, with the Jewish theocracy.”⁶

¹ Exodus, xxxv. and xxxvi.

² 1 Sam. ii. 12, 16; Micah. iii. 11.

³ Euseb. lib. iii. 20.

⁴ See the language of W. Brute, W. Thorpe, W. Swinderby, and others in Fox's Acts and Monuments, vol. i.; also W. Fuller, on Heb. vii.; Willett's Synopsis, &c.

⁵ Chap. xxxii.

⁶ Comments, ii. 3.

Among the Romans, Greeks and some other ancient nations, it appears to have been not uncommon to dedicate to the acknowledged deities, on particular occasions of success, a tenth or some other part of the proceeds, or of their whole property, in token of veneration and gratitude, as well as to propitiate the divine favour in future.

2nd Section.—The origin and general establishment of Tithes among Christians.

Our Lord, on the introduction of his new and perfect dispensation, gave, as has been remarked in the last chapter, no countenance to a system of stipulated pay for the preaching of the gospel; nor from his apostles did it derive any encouragement, either by precept or by practice. On the contrary, while many of them accepted what was required and freely offered for their support, they declared that their object was the salvation of the souls of the people, and not the possession of their silver or gold; and steadily did they denounce those teachers, who were “greedy of filthy lucre,” and made “merchandise of men through covetousness!” Nor are tithes once named in the New Testament as a provision for Christian ministers. It is therefore evident that neither such a system, nor that of any other pecuniary contract for the preaching of the gospel, is sanctioned under the present dispensation by the authority of Christ or his apostles.

At Jerusalem and other places, most of the early believers renounced the sole right to their own property, having for a time “all things common;” and “distribution was made to every man,” whether minister or hearer, “according as he had need,” by “daily ministration.” Afterwards, we read of periodical collections for the poor “on the first day of the week;” and to these succeeded monthly offerings, as each was of ability and felt disposed to contribute. On the destruction of the city and temple by the Romans, about forty years after the crucifixion, the Mosaic law and Jewish observances were so completely annulled, that the existence or revival of tithes is not to be traced even among the Jews. In the Christian church they were entirely unknown for at least 300 years. The ecclesiastical historians make no mention of them, although they frequently speak of the lands and possessions of the church. There was

at the same time an entire confusion of the Jewish tribes, and it has never since been found practicable to distinguish the descendants of Aaron or Levi. Tertullian, in his apology written about the year 200, says of the practice of the Christians at that time: "Every one pays something into the public chest once a month, or when he pleases, and according to his ability and inclination; for there is no compulsion, but each contributes freely. These gifts are, as it were, the deposits of piety. Hence we relieve and bury the needy, support orphan and decrepid persons, those who have suffered shipwreck, and those who, for the word of God, are condemned to the mines or to imprisonment."¹ This simple mode of contribution is stated by Eusebius to have been continued till after the year 300: its great object being a provision for the poor, and not for the ministry. It is manifest that no sort of tithes was paid to the church nor imposed by any of its authorities, prior to the Council of Nice. In the records of Constantine's generosity no mention is made of such a mode of payment.²

At an early period however lands had been given to the church; the income from these, and the voluntary collections, being under the charge of the deacons and elders, for the relief of indigent Christians, without distinction of office. So bountiful were the donations to some churches, that at Rome, about the year 150, they served for the relief of the poor in other places, and for the redemption of numerous captives. Even some of the persecutions arose from the desire of the emperors to possess the private and public property of the Christians. The gains of the trading ministers went to the church and the poor.³ The council held at Antioch in 340 enacted, in consequence of a complaint against some of the deacons, and perhaps from other motives, that the bishops should distribute the goods of the church; but it enjoined them to appropriate no part to themselves, unless like others they were in absolute need; quoting the words of the Apostle:—"having food and raiment, be therewith content." Soon after this, many of the Christians sold what they had, withdrew from civil society, and united together in monastic communities, having all things common after the example of former times; but ascetic in their character

¹ Milner, 3rd cent. ii. chap.

² Waddington's Hist.

³ Paolo Sarpi on Benefices, chap. iii.

and supported chiefly by donations. These donations however did not at first consist of any particular proportion, nor were they limited in application to any special class of persons.

Darkness and corruption were now increasing, and invaded the doctrine and practice of the church; so that the ministers of religion, assuming the title of "clergy"—God's lot, or heritage,—began to expect payment in money for the performance of religious service. At first the funds were applied principally for the relief of such as were poor; and next, contributions "for holy uses" were strongly urged. At Rome, 1500 indigent persons are related to have received relief from the funds of the church in the time of Cornelius; and above 3000 at Antioch in the time of Chrysostom, about the year 400. The whole number who attended Christian worship at Antioch is said, at the same time, to have been not fewer than 100,000.¹ To make provision for the poor, was the great object of the early church in the acquisition of property; but entirely has this application been neglected and perverted by modern and even by reformed churches. The ministry soon usurped the reasonable claims of poverty.

The learned John Selden, who wrote a History of Tithes in 1618, and was persecuted for his liberal sentiments, quotes the authority of Chrysostom, to prove that at that time the ministers were supported only out of voluntary contributions, though he recommended the people to give not less than a tenth. Being very generally exempted from secular services and contributions, the exemption proved an inducement to many unworthy persons to undertake the sacred office. They prevailed on the sick and on widows to make the church their heirs, so that an ordinance was made in the year 370, to forbid the practice.² In the apostolical constitutions and canons, which were pretended to be drawn up by the apostles and to be collected by Clement, the payment of tenths, and an opinion in favour of their being received by the bishops, are expressly stated; but it is evident that this whole work is an imposture, like many others attributed to the same age; and as such it was denounced in a general council held about the year 490.³ Even

¹ Bingham's Christian Antiquities; Sarpi on Benefices.

² Sarpi on Benefices, chap. iii. 6.

³ See Mosheim's History, 1st century, 2nd chap.

in this compilation, which is attributed to the fourth or fifth century, the contributions to the church are styled "free gifts," and its officers are forbidden to accept them from the impenitent or vicious.¹ Of no better authority are the decrees of a council, said to have been held at Rome under Pope Damasus, about 380; in which mention is made of tenths, as "rightly to be paid by the faithful." An epistle from Jerome to the same pope, alluding to tenths and offerings, is also rejected by competent authorities. These and many others are manifestly fabrications of later periods for particular purposes, and entitled to no credit, being self-contradictory, and referring to circumstances which occurred long after their pretended dates.

From the latter part of the fourth century, the apostacy made great progress, and the power of the ecclesiastics rapidly increased. The people were solemnly urged to make larger contributions "for pious uses," to offer the first fruits, and to follow the example of the ancient Jews, by not presenting less than a tenth. This practice is alluded to about that time as prevailing in several countries of the west; but though many councils were held, not one of them, in any document considered genuine, appears to have enforced tithes.²

The bishops gradually assumed great authority in disposing of the common funds, so that, in order to restrain them, it was decreed in the western church, about the year 470, that a division should be made into four parts, to be proportioned according to circumstances, for the bishops, the ministers, the edifices, and the poor.³

The institution of monasteries, and the artifices of the monks on the minds of credulous and devout persons, contributed largely to increase the wealth of the church. The Benedictines alone are said to have had 15,000 religious houses, besides lesser convents.⁴ All alienations of church revenues to secular purposes were strictly forbidden.

In the fifth and sixth centuries, several of those called Fathers of the church, as Ambrose and Augustine, urged the payment of tenths to be due by God's law, that the poor might not want; referring for authority to the Mosaic institutions. Jerome "the great monk of the age," recommended the generous

¹ Books ii. and iv.

² Selden's Hist. chap. v.

³ Sarpi on Benefices, chap. vii.

⁴ Ib. chap. viii.

contribution of not less than a tenth. Gregory, a very superstitious pope, advised the hallowing of "Lent," or a tenth of the year, as well as the dedication of the tenth of property, excepting that gained by usury or war. From the decided opinions and urgent recommendations of these and other authorities, the payment of tenths, the observance of Lent, and other superstitious practices, came by degrees to be generally adopted.

Some canons of the church, enforcing the right and payment of tithes, are attributed to this period; but one only, of a council held at Mascon, or Matiscon, in the diocese of Lyons, in the year 586, claiming them for the use of the poor and for the redemption of captives, and threatening the excommunication of such as should not pay, possesses any claim to authenticity; the rest being evident fabrications of later dates. With that doubtful exception, there appear to be no decrees of bishops, determining or commanding tenths or tithes, before the year 700; though there are some which treat largely of church revenues, oblations, &c.¹

In the eighth century, perpetual endowments of tenths began to be made, for abbeys and other churches, according to the will of the donors. The story of Charles Martel despoiling the churches of tithes, and giving them to the laity, about 740, is entirely discredited by Selden; though he thinks it may have been true with respect to other property. It was through great opposition and much bloodshed that the yoke of tithes was imposed on the Saxons, the Huns and some other nations, about 760; and as soon as the armed forces of the Franks were withdrawn, these people threw off the profession of christianity, chiefly on account of this and other impositions.²

The testimony of Agobard, an eminent bishop of Lyons, is important, and shows that the impost was not then generally established. Writing in the latter part of the eighth century, he says, "Nothing has ever been decreed in the synods, nothing publicly commanded by the holy fathers, as to the dedication of property or establishment of churches. No necessity has compelled; a religious devotion prevailing everywhere, and a desire to establish and honour the churches spontaneously prompting." Down to this period no extant law of the Eastern

¹ Selden, chap. v.

² Neander's History, vol. iii. sec. 1; and Selden, chap. v.

church mentions tithes; and it is evident that, until nearly the year 800, no decree, canon or council, generally received in the western church, prescribed the payment of any certain part.¹ Yet it appears that tenths were often brought by the more devout, and bestowed from time to time in various ways; some gave them to the priests, others to the abbots; some to the churches, and others to the poor: offerings were expected from all, but the amount and the object were indefinite. Lay persons or patrons often claimed the right to receive the tenths, paying out of them such sums for ecclesiastical or charitable purposes as they thought proper, or felt inclined to contribute. Many pious individuals devoted a tenth of their substance to the church before the practice was generally enforced. The amount received was still generally divided into four parts. In some countries, however, the division was only into three, the practice varying much in different districts.

In 791, a provincial synod was held at Friuli in Italy, when the duty to pay tenths was grounded on the words of the prophet Malachi, "Bring all the tithes into my storehouse," &c.; but no such practice was generally enforced by any canon of the church.

Most of the bishops lived in monasteries with their ministers, who went out to preach and exercise their functions in the country round, and were termed "secular clergy." The occupiers of other monasteries being under abbots or priors, were subject to the rules of their respective orders, and were supposed to have wholly withdrawn from the world, being denominated "regular clergy." The people at large were considered as having no part in these holy offices, and were called, by an unhappy distinction, "lay persons." The abbots were more generous than the bishops towards the poor and strangers; hence they were more popular, and the people often preferred to pay their tithes and give donations to them, knowing that they would be applied more charitably. This preference, though denounced by the bishops as a heinous offence, continued to operate, until at length it was prohibited by law.

The enactments for the payment of tithes were either imperial, provincial, or pontifical. The first of the imperial decrees was made by Charlemagne, in a general assembly of civil and ecclesiastical estates in 788, when he confirmed the fourfold division,

¹ Selden, chap. v.

² Blackstone's Commentaries, 2, 3,—2, 1.

which the bishops had invaded, but which long after continued to be recognized. Charlemagne greatly augmented the revenues and power of the church, and raised its ministers to rank and influence. The impost still appears to have been very partially and imperfectly discharged. Several provincial laws in favour of tithes were enacted about that time. A Council of Mentz, in 813, was explicit on the subject, in these words:—"We admonish and command, that it be not neglected to give the tenths wholly to God." This was closely followed by councils at Rheims, Arles, and Chalons. Similar decrees of Scotch and English princes of this period are also extant, but of doubtful authority. Tithes and other church funds were still called "the Lord's goods," "the patrimony of the poor," &c.¹

Of pontifical enactments for the payment of tithes, the first appears to be one of Pope Nicholas II. in 1059. "We command," says he, "that tenths and first-fruits, or offerings of the living and the dead, be faithfully rendered to the churches of God by the laity; and that they be at the disposal of the bishops. Whoso shall retain them, let such be separated from the communion of the holy church." The same terms were used by his successor, Alexander II. A council of Gregory VII., surnamed Hildebrand, was held at Rome about 1070; and alluded to tithes, as received by special gifts or consecrations. Another at Clairmont, under Urban II. in 1095, decreed that the laity should not keep back the tenth part.

Most of the sermons of those ages pointed to the duty of the payment of tithes, which was enforced with great urgency; matters of doctrine and religious obligation being generally excluded. And not content with tithes of the produce of the soil, the ecclesiastics began to claim personal tithes also, beyond even Jewish example.²

A regulation termed *Precaria* was artfully introduced in the ninth century, which secured to those who made over property to the church three times the annual value as long as they lived; and the tenure of civil property being much more precarious than that of ecclesiastical, in those days of superstition and disorder, many proprietors, and especially those without children, gladly embraced the terms.³ The whole system had by this time

¹ Selden Hist. chap. v.

² P. Sarpi on Benefices, chap. xi.

³ P. Sarpi on Benefices, chap. xix.

become extremely corrupt, being a natural consequence of considering the support of the ministry as a species of property.

The ninth general council, held at the Lateran in 1119, under Calixtus II., appears to have been the first which mentions tithes: and it alludes to them as given or consecrated by individuals. Feudal, inappropriate or lay tithes are spoken of in the enactments of another general council, held at the same place in 1130. About 1151, these and other decrees, with the laws of some provincial councils, and passages from the writings of Augustine, Ambrose and others, in support of tithes, were collected and confirmed as general canon law, by Eugenius III. The general or œcumenical council of the greatest authority is the eleventh under Alexander III., held in 1180; but the only allusion to the question is, that the infodation or grant of tithes to lay persons is prohibited, and also their appropriation to religious houses, without the consent of the bishop. Until this time, it is evident that they were frequently given to any individual or ecclesiastical body, at the will of the donor. The prohibition was confirmed by several subsequent councils.

The priests commonly urged this inquiry on each devotee at the shrift or confessional, "Hast thou at any time neglected to pay thy tenths to God, which he himself hath ordained to be given him? If thou hast done so, or consented to the defrauding of the church therein, first restore to God fourfold, and then must thou suffer penance, with bread and water only, for twenty days."

Still however, in some countries, it was found impossible to enforce the payment. About 1160, extensive tracts of waste land having been brought into cultivation in the diocese of Oldenburgh, the cultivators, although willing to give some part of the increase, objected to contribute a tenth to the church; and, notwithstanding the strong persuasions and authority of the bishop and the court, they utterly refused the claim, declaring with tumult and clamour, that they never would submit their necks to the servile yoke of the priests, under which most other Christians laboured. Nor could the payment be enforced on the Danes, whose abhorrence of the system was so great, that it proved the chief cause of their betraying and murdering the king, Canute IV., when he would have imposed the practice.

¹ Selden's *Tithes*, chap. vi. 6.

About 1180, under Waldimir I., the bishop used every effort to induce the people to pay, on pain of an interdict; but they stoutly refused, and sent a public message to the clergy, commanding them to continue the divine services, or to depart the country; and threatening them, if they declined both, with not only the loss of their property, but the maiming of their limbs. Krantz the historian relates, that it was with great difficulty that the Norman nations generally were prevailed on to render the tenths; but that at length, about the year 1200, many of them yielded to the combined authority of the church and their princes.¹

No canon of a general council is found, expressly commanding the payment of tithes, or assuming them to be due by acknowledged right, until that of the Lateran in 1215, under Innocent III.² Ecclesiastical authority had however now attained its greatest height, and much deference being paid, in most countries, to the canons of the church, the parochial claim to receive tithes was enforced by the ecclesiastics, and arbitrary consecrations were declared unlawful; so that, about 1260, the local right was assumed by the authorities of the church to be fully established, although the exceptions were still numerous and the practice varied in different countries.

Thus the sacred duty of the Christian ministry was degraded, and rendered more and more a freehold or leasehold, an office to be bought and sold; and true religion proportionately suffered loss. The most secure property, in those times of frequent anarchy, was that belonging to the church, which was guarded from spoliation by a superstitious dread of the priests. Hence many persons surrendered their lands to the ecclesiastics for greater safety, and held under them as vassals. It was computed that in Germany the officers of the church got into their hands more than one-half of the whole property of the nation. In many countries the share was prodigious,³ and it is said to have amounted to a full half of all the soil of Europe!

In 1537, at the time of the Reformation, an application was made by the reformed ministers to an assembly of German protestant princes at Smalkald, for a provision to be made out of the ecclesiastical funds for three objects—the maintenance of the clergy, the education of youth, and the support of hos-

¹ Selden, vi. 7.

² Ibid.

³ Robertson's Charles V.

pitals for the aged and infirm poor. Seckendorf states that a regulation to this purpose was adopted and carried into effect, but that the former popish partakers in those funds were allowed a subsistence for life.¹

The great decree which speaks most plainly on the subject of tithes, is that of the Council of Trent, under Pius IV., about 1560; which commanded them to be paid, under penalty of excommunication, as being due to God.² This was the celebrated council, which, though summoned to consider the state of the church, and to suggest measures for its reformation, confirmed many of its grosser corruptions, and declared that its traditions should be esteemed of equal authority with the Scriptures!

Although, through the intrigues of the ecclesiastics, tithes were thus established after the example of the Jewish law, yet other parts of that law were wholly neglected, which gave the priests but a tenth of the tithes, and also forbade those who ministered to possess property in land. Personal tithes also were now required, which had been unknown to the ancient Jews.

"History puts it beyond all doubt," says Paolo Sarpi in his treatise on benefices, "that no tithes were ever paid in Africa, or in the east, and that they owe their origin to France about 585."

When the Crusaders were victorious in Turkey, and Innocent III. established a Latin church at Constantinople, a concordat was concluded in 1216, according to which, a fifth portion of all cultivated produce was at once made over to the Latin church, and the monasteries were also to be transferred to it. The papal authority in the east was however of short duration, and its impositions were not generally established.

3rd Section.—On the establishment of Tithes in England.

The general superstition and clerical usurpations, which led to the institution of tithes abroad, operated in a similar manner to introduce them into this country, during the corrupt ages.

About the year 600, many of the Britons, especially those inhabiting Kent, with Ethelbert their king, adopted the profession of christianity, under the preaching of Austin or Augustin the monk, who had been sent over for their conversion by Pope Gregory I. Augustin and his fellow-labourers followed for

¹ Luther and the Reformation, vol. ii.

² See Selden's Hist.; Elwood's "Foundation of Tithes Shaken"; Neander, Mosheim, Milner, &c.

some time the example of former ages, receiving only from those whom they taught such things as were necessary for their support; but at length, having brought over most of the nation to their faith, they introduced the papal doctrine that the faithful ought to contribute largely to the church. On an appeal to the Pope, “into how many portions the things given by the faithful to the altar,” were to be divided, he replied that “all emoluments which accrue” were, by the customs of the apostolic see, divided into four portions; one for the bishop and his family to support hospitality, a second to the clergy, a third to the poor, and a fourth to the reparation of churches.¹

The priests and churches of Britain were maintained until the time of Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, about 673, solely by the voluntary contributions of the people; but as this was a precarious resource, he prevailed on the kings of the different states to impose a special tax on their subjects for that purpose, under the name of Kirkscot. He also assigned fixed stations to the priests, who had hitherto moved from place to place.²

About 790, the Pope sent two legates to England, one of whom attended a council held at Calcuith, and presented twenty regulations or canons which he had brought from Rome. In these was asserted the divine right of the clergy to the tenth of all the possessions of the laity, also a claim to exemption from being tried and punished by the civil authorities.³

Offa king of Mercia, having caused Ethelbert, the young king of the East Angles, to be murdered about 793, fled to Rome to seek for pardon and protection: when, to atone for his sin and to conciliate the Pope, “he gave the tenth part of his goods to holy church;” and afterward he became a monk. Thus were tithes introduced into two of the British heptarchies.

After the union, and the establishment of the kingdom of England, Ethelwolf, the second sovereign, made, in the year 855, a fresh grant, which is generally considered the chief origin and foundation of tithes in this country. Its language is quoted differently by different historians; but they agree in the main; and though obscurely expressed, the grant clearly shows his motives:—“Since, in our times, we see the ravages of war, the plunder of our property, and the cruel depredations of hostile,

¹ Fox's *Acts and Monuments*, vol. i. ² Bede's *Ecc. Hist.* chap. xxvii.

³ Henry's *Hist. England*; Prideaux on Tithes, &c.

barbarous and heathen nations ; and many troubles prevailing, so as to afflict us even to destruction, and dangerous times impending ; therefore I, Ethelwolf, King of the West Saxons, with the counsel of my bishops and princes, have adopted a salutary measure and a uniform remedy : to wit, that I grant a tenth part of my hereditary lands to God, and the holy Mary, and to all the saints, to be possessed by a perpetual right, by the servants of God both male and female of all degrees, and by the distressed laity. Also a tenth part of all my goods I have dedicated for the redemption of the souls of my ancestors and of my own soul, to the perpetual use of the holy church, to be safe and secure from all secular services, royal tributes and taxes, to the service of God alone ; that they may the more diligently pour out prayers to God for us, as we in some degree lighten their condition."

It may be observed that the first object in view was to procure a remedy for the irruptions of the Danes ; and the second, to obtain redemption, or the remission of sins ! On these two superstitious and untenable grounds was the great decree for tithes in England founded. Ethelwolf, having been an ecclesiastic in early life, was a very superstitious prince ; and, as Fox says, "having been once nestled in that order, was always good and devout to holy church and religious objects."

One writer says that he gave some part of his lands ; another, that he gave a tenth ; and a third, that it was a tenth of all West Saxony ; while a fourth includes also a tenth of his goods and chattels. One relates that he endowed the whole English church, "*universam dotavit ecclesiam Anglicanam;*" and another, in Norman French, that it was to feed and clothe the poor, "*pur pestre et vestre les pauurts.*"² All however agree in the superstitious motives which prompted the grant.

The terms of many of the charters of tithes from the early kings, whether to particular abbeys or churches, or of a more general nature, are nearly the same as the foregoing, varying only in some few particulars. Most of them have reference to the same religious motives and to the relief of the poor, with imprecations on such as refuse to obey. These repeated grants show that they were mainly of a local character, and that

¹ Acts and Monuments, vol. i. ² Selden, William of Malmsbury, &c.

a strong reluctance existed in the minds of the people to submit to the imposition.

The forgery of charters was no uncommon device in the middle ages. The monks perverted their knowledge of writing to the purpose of forging documents in their own favour; which might easily impose on an ignorant age, since it has required a peculiar science to detect them in modern times.¹

Of this the ninth century, in which tithes were set up and other great innovations introduced, Milner, the historian of Episcopal Protestants, speaks as follows:—"We are penetrating into the regions of darkness, 'a land of deserts and pits, a land of drought and of the shadow of death;' and we are carried by every step into scenes still more gloomy than the former. Here and there, indeed, a glimmering ray of the Sun of Righteousness appears; but it is vain to look for any steady lustre of evangelical truth and holiness. Several circumstances attended the thick darkness which pervaded this century, namely, the preference given to human writings above the Scriptures, the domination of the Popedom, the accumulation of ceremonies, and the oppression of the godly."

The artifices of the priests to confirm and extend their own authority, by bringing back many of the views and observances of Judaism, were very successful. The ministers assumed the title of priests or Levites, and the pope claimed to be considered the successor of the Jewish high priest. *They* required the payment of the tithes, and *he* of the tenths and first fruits. The ideas of altars, and sacrifices, and temples, &c., &c., were strongly inculcated, as though Christ had not put an end to the ceremonial law, or as though he had reconstructed it under a new and permanent character. They attempted to put the new wine into the old bottles, and with the new cloth to repair the old garment, forgetting the warning given by Christ himself, that this course was contrary to the spirit of the gospel, and that thus the wine would be spilt and the rent be made worse.²

In the tenth and eleventh centuries, several of the English kings passed laws confirming the payment of tithes; but in the copies of some of these enactments there is reason to believe that interpolations have been made at later periods.

¹ Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. ii.

² Matt. ix. 16, 17.

King Edgar, about 970, took from the people the right of paying tithes at their own discretion, and directed that they should be paid in their respective parishes: his orders, however, were resisted by the monasteries or lay houses, and were not carried into general effect. In a synod held about the time of the Conquest, several laws were made for the punishment of crimes, by fasting and pecuniary penalties; together with a persuasive to give alms, and the decree, "let tithe be paid of all that is possessed through the Lord's bounty."

The following extract from a confirmatory charter granted by King Stephen to the priory of Eye in Suffolk, in the year 1137, affords a striking specimen of the false notions under which tithes were enacted: "Because, through the providence of Divine mercy, we know it to be ordered, and by the churches publishing it far and near, it has reached the ears of all, that by the giving of alms, the bonds of sin may be broken, and the rewards of heavenly joys obtained; I, Stephen, by the grace of God King of the English, desiring to partake with those who, by a happy commerce, exchange heavenly things for earthly, smitten with the love of God, and for the salvation of my own soul, and the souls of my father and mother, and of the kings my ancestors—viz., of King William my grandfather, and of King William my uncle, and of King Henry my uncle, and of Robert Malet—and with the advice of my Barons, do grant to God, and to the church of the holy Peter of Eye, and to the monks there assembled in the divine service of God, &c., &c."¹

The charter concludes thus:—"Whosoever shall knowingly take away, diminish or disturb any thing contained in this charter, let him be, by the authority of the Lord Almighty, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and of the holy Apostles and all the Saints, excommunicated, anathematised, and separated from the flock of the Lord and the limits of the holy church, until he shall repent and pay to the royal authority thirty pounds of gold. So be it! So be it! So be it! Amen. Amen. Amen!" Signed by the bishop of Norwich, Ganston the prior of Eye, by the King, Queen and Prince, by two archbishops and eight bishops. This is only one out of many similar grants of tithes to religious houses; but it is said by Selden to be the largest and fairest charter he had seen.

¹ Pearson's Great Case of Tithes; Selden's Hist. chap. ii.

Several things are worthy of notice in this curious specimen of politico-religious dotation :—1st, King Stephen's method of giving alms, by charging the property of his subjects both then and thereafter ; 2nd, his idea that by such means persons might be absolved from sin ; 3rd, the imagined commerce, by which heavenly things, and the salvation of his own and his ancestors' souls, could be received in exchange for this exaction of his people's property ; and 4th, the fulminations pronounced against those who should disobey. Thus superstitious, priest-ridden monarchs, misled by false notions of piety, and blinded by the delusive expectation of atoning for the sins of themselves and their ancestors, imposed a heavy burden on their subjects, and established the unreasonable impost on future generations !

Under Henry I. it was ordained, in a convocation at Westminster, "that tithes be not rendered but to the churches;" and in another grant to a monastery in the same reign, one half of the tithes is specially restricted to be "distributed for the use of the poor." A claim to some such partition was recognized in England by many of the original grants, and was acknowledged in numerous documents down to the time of the reformation.¹ Since then it has been very much overlooked and abandoned, the tithes being wholly absorbed by the ministers and impro priators ; while the support of the poor, and the repairs of the places of worship have been thrown on the public, to be provided for by distinct and heavy rates. Gratuitous duties of an educational kind towards the children of the parish, are also enjoined by various laws on each minister, but they appear to have been little recognized till very recently.

About 1200, among the decretal epistles of Pope Innocent III., who confirmed the notion and term of transubstantiation, and set up the Inquisition, one is directed to the Archbishop of Canterbury, commanding him to enjoin every man to pay his temporal goods to those who ministered spiritual things to him in his own parish.² This was enforced by ecclesiastical censures, and was the beginning of general parochial tithes in England ; many ancient exceptions were admitted, however, in favour of religious houses and others. Canon law was long the chief authority for tithes.

¹ Fox's Acts and Monuments, vol. iii. ; Selden chap. v.

² Blackstone 2, 3, 2, 2 ; Selden chap. vii., sect. 1 ; Selden's Hist. chap. ii.

The chief of the English canon laws enjoining the payment of tithes, both prædial and personal, is commonly attributed to a council held in London, in 1385, by the Archbishop of Canterbury, in the reign of Richard II., who also confirmed the tithes to the parishes; but it was directed, by acts of that king and of Henry IV., that in all appropriations of churches, the bishop of the diocese should ordain a convenient sum of money to be annually distributed, out of the fruits and profits of every living, among the poor parishioners, in aid of their sustenance for ever!

Thus having been gradually introduced, and at length established in England, tithes were soon claimed by prescription, as "due to God and holy church." The laws enjoining the payment generally take this ground, and not any civil right or property possessed by the claimants.

Henry VIII., instead of removing the yoke, as might have been justly expected from the Reformation, extended it to the inhabitants of London, who had been hitherto in a great measure exempt, and passed new laws to strengthen and enforce the system; although he abolished the payment called Peter's pence, which had subsisted with several intermissions for about 800 years, and all other payments to Rome. In truth, his great object seems to have been, to transfer to himself the revenues and the authority which had hitherto been enjoyed by the pope. The papacy had made large claims on the estates and minds of the people, and he was equally desirous to possess himself of the spoils. The preamble of the Act of the 27th of his reign, chap. 20, "for tithes to be paid throughout this realm," is as follows:—"Forasmuch as divers numbers of evil-disposed persons, having no respect of their duties to Almighty God, but against right and good conscience, have attempted to subtract and withhold, in some places the whole, and in other places great parts, of their tithes and oblations, as well personal as prædial, due unto God and holy church,—for reformation of which said injuries, and for unity and peace to be preserved amongst the king's subjects, our sovereign lord the king, being supreme head on earth (under God) of the church of England, willing that the spiritual rights and duties of that church should be maintained, hath ordained and enacted, by authority of this present parliament, that every of his subjects of

this realm, according to the ecclesiastical laws and ordinances of his church of England, and after the laudable usages and customs of the parish where he dwelleth, shall yield and pay his tithes, offerings and other duties of holy church," &c. &c.

This preamble shows that the payment of tithes was then objected to by "numbers of persons," also that they were claimed on the ground of prescription, and of their being "due to God and holy church." Although this king was undoubtedly permitted to be instrumental in accomplishing much substantial good; yet his avarice and his leaning to many of the abuses of popery are too well known to need any comment. The reformation which he introduced was at best but very incomplete, and even from this he returned in some respects to the former system during the latter years of his reign, when he became so bloodthirsty, changeable and tyrannical, that his subjects scarcely knew whether their lives were more endangered by the profession of popish or of protestant principles. Many persons had doubtless expected that the denial of various popish errors would have led to the denial of the claim of tithes; but in this they were utterly disappointed, the oppressive and anti-christian burthen being enforced with still heavier penalties.

In the reign of Edward VI., an act was passed for the payment of tithes, both prædial and personal, under pain of *treble damages*; and their recovery was still limited to the extravagant ecclesiastical courts: since that time personal tithes have, to a great extent, been commuted or become otherwise obsolete; while prædial tithes have been repeatedly recognised and confirmed by law; but the penalties for non-payment have been mitigated, and the proceedings for recovery rendered less expensive. In order to save the system from destruction, it has been stripped of some of its more obviously revolting features.

Tithes, being the tenth part of the annual increase, arising from the land, from the stock, and the industry and skill of the people, were either prædial, as of corn, grass, &c.; or mixed, as wool, milk, pigs, &c.; or personal, as of manual occupations, trades, fisheries, &c. The gross produce was tithed under the first two heads, and the nett profits under the last head. They were also distinguished, with respect to value, into great and small, rectorial and vicarial; great tithes being on corn, &c., and

small tithes the personal and mixed. The operation of Ethelwolf's grant was limited chiefly, if not solely, to prædial tithes. William the Conqueror added the smaller or mixed tithes, and much increased the oppression. Some of the demands for personal tithe, which still subsist and are upheld on the ground of custom, are of an extremely unreasonable nature, particularly those in some places on fisheries and on mills.

Most of our historians and jurists, who have adverted to the establishment of this great impost and to other usurpations of the church, describe in strong terms of censure the shameless rapacity and encroachments of the ecclesiastics, who were at length prevented only by stringent laws, from swallowing up the greatest part of the land in the nation! "Not content," says Blackstone, "with the ample provision of tithes, which the law had given to the parochial clergy, they endeavoured to grasp at the lands and inheritances of the kingdom; and had not the legislature withheld them, would by this time have probably been masters of every foot of ground in Britain."¹ The statutes of mortmain and other enactments were found absolutely necessary to restrain this insatiable avarice!

If we turn to the continent of Europe, we find the same rapacious spirit to have prevailed in many countries till it received a check; most of the popes too who fostered it and introduced the tithe system, were notorious for their ambition, avarice and crimes. The history of these pontiffs, and of the transactions in which they took a principal part, is highly repulsive and disgusting. It is only wonderful that a system, which was unknown to the earliest and purest ages of the Christian church, and indebted to the intrigues of such men for its origin, should have been allowed to subsist in this land, with some partial modifications, to the present day!

The evil effects produced on the interests of true religion by such endowments for upholding certain doctrines and practices, and the suspicious circumstances under which they were introduced, are surely sufficient to excite a deep and general interest on the question, in our comparatively happy land, and it cannot be doubted that this will be the case, as it is fully considered, and as the light of Christian truth increases. Thus, under the

¹ Commentaries, iv. 8.

divine blessing, the reformation of religion will be further advanced, and protestant Britain will not long remain almost the only exception to the abolition of the tithe system ; but by moral and constitutional means, her generally free and fair institutions will be purged of the evil of a state-endowed hierarchy, and our beloved country will at length be freed for ever from the servile yoke !

May the nature of true, disinterested gospel ministry and worship speedily become more clearly understood ; and may the practical influence of christianity, free, pure, and beneficent, spread universally among the nations of the earth !

4th Section.—Chief characteristics of the period in which Tithes were introduced and established.

Whoever traces with impartiality the adoption of the tithe system by professing Christians, cannot fail to be impressed with the corrupt character of that long and dark period, in which it first sprang up, and at length acquired a strong, general and permanent hold. It was one of the products of the apostacy—when superstition reigned supreme, and when ignorance debased the minds of men, making them a ready prey to the covetousness and ambition of sordid ecclesiastics. The true nature of religion appears, during that long night, to have been generally unknown, with some bright exceptions ; and in its stead prevailed lifeless forms, fanatical observances, unblushing covetousness and unscrupulous hypocrisy !

A brief inquiry into other corrupt and strange opinions and practices, which originated and became current during the same ages, will suffice to show whether or not the system under consideration is fairly entitled, on account of its antiquity, to possess any weight of authority in the Christian churches of later and more enlightened periods.

Even in the second century, monasticism, penances and voluntary austerities began to be practised. Scriptural religion had lost much ground, and prayers, offerings and sacrifices for the dead were introduced. Great stress was laid on the celebration of what is called Easter, and violent controversy arose about the proper time for observing it ; the oriental churches following

the ancient Jewish period of the Passover, and the western churches keeping the first day of the week next the Saviour's resurrection. The Bishop of Rome excommunicated the Asiatics.

In the third century, incense and frequent fasts were introduced, ceremonies were multiplied, exorcism was practised to drive away evil spirits; and many religious persons betook themselves to deserts and caves, where they used severe discipline and self-torture, professing thereby to commend themselves to the Most High. The doctrine of purgatory was embraced, and licentious sports were encouraged in celebrating the memory of the martyrs!

In the fourth century, Constantine and his successors made great innovations on the simple government of the church; excluding the people from any part in it, and claiming great power and immunities for the ecclesiastics. Various rites, superstitious and even pagan, were gradually substituted for true religion and genuine piety. Pilgrimages, relics, fasts, monasticism and miracles were upheld: the celibacy of the priests was enjoined; and the worship of the Christians, in many places, differed very little in appearance from that of the heathen, both having a splendid and pompous ritual.

The fifth century was distinguished by odious quarrels and bloody wars between the authorities of the several churches; scandalous dissensions generally prevailed, and real religion became apparently almost extinct; images were introduced; the pride and licentiousness of the clergy increased, and the morals and principles of the people proportionately suffered; most of them being devoted to superstitions and fictions.

In the sixth century, monasticism further increased; violent contests prevailed between the eastern and western churches, ignorance became greater; the immoralities of the ministers or clergy were notorious; gross abuses and superstitions multiplied. Hence were inculcated absurd notions concerning the celebration of the mass, the worship of images and saints, the fire of purgatory, and the efficacy of good works; the principal place being given to outward rites and observances for the attainment of salvation, the power of relics to heal the diseases of body and mind, and other similar fancies.

The ignorance, darkness and barbarism, that reigned in the seventh century, were so great that they could scarcely be exceeded. Ambition, avarice and hypocrisy pervaded the churches; and large estates were bequeathed to the monks and other ecclesiastics, under the delusion, which was artfully inculcated, that past immoralities and crimes would thus be expiated.

In the eighth century, the general corruption, which had before darkened and perverted the clergy, still increased; they abandoned themselves to their passions without shame or restraint, and were distinguished by their luxury, gluttony and lust; the people being held in abject servility. The notion of atoning for sin by endowing churches and monasteries, produced great accumulations of wealth to the priests; these acts being often attended with a shameful invasion of the rights of private individuals and of families.

The luxury, impiety and licentiousness of most of the clergy continued to be excessive in the ninth century, and were only equalled by their general ignorance and superstition. The arrogance and ambition of the popes led them to assume unprecedented authority; bitter controversies and quarrels increased; the monastic life was held in the highest esteem; ceremonies, pretended saints and relics swarmed; the worship of images became more general; and the doctrine of transubstantiation was introduced.

In the tenth century, deplorable ignorance, barbarism and confusion still prevailed; yet not without faint gleams of light in some directions. The clergy were mostly debased in superstition, darkness and immorality, and the Roman pontiffs appear to have been so many monsters of guilt and infamy. The sale of sacred appointments was openly practised; the doctrines of christianity were disfigured and perverted; divine worship being loaded with additional ceremonies; and the essence of religion was deemed to consist in venerating images and saints, in discovering and honouring reliques, and in accumulating riches upon the priests and monks.

In the eleventh century, the wild and superstitious crusades tended to augment the wealth and power of the church; the bishops of Rome assumed the title of pope or common father; Gregory VII., or Hildebrand, aimed at no less than universal

dominion, and involved Europe in confusion and bloodshed. Ignorance, superstition, licentiousness, frauds, dissensions and other enormities prevailed in all ranks of the ecclesiastics ; and celibacy being imposed upon them, concubinage was generally practised ; yet a desire for knowledge, and for a reformation in religion, showed itself in some countries.

In the twelfth century also, the attainment of knowledge, the study of philosophy, and the conversion of the heathen obtained a place ; but flagrant licentiousness, with gross ignorance and superstition, predominated. The popes struggled violently to maintain their arbitrary rule : indulgences to commit sin were granted and sold to raise money ; and the prevalence of sophistry, mysticism and fanaticism produced strange controversies and excesses among the various sects and orders.

A spirit of chivalry was cultivated, and the crusades still continued in the thirteenth century ; other wars, crimes and calamities followed, and the extravagant supremacy of the Pope was maintained. Although knowledge was zealously cultivated by a few, and some partial reformation was introduced into the church ; yet ignorance pervaded the multitude, fanaticism and superstition maintained a firm ground, transubstantiation took stronger hold ; and those who denied this and other corrupt doctrines, were barbarously persecuted by inquisitors and others.

In the fourteenth century, learning made some progress, and a desire for reformation increased, amid prevailing corruption and ignorance ; disgraceful dissensions and conflicts among the aspirants to the papal see embroiled Europe in wars. Persecution also followed the Waldenses, Lollards and other enlightened people, who successively arose.

In the fifteenth century, religious light and learning advanced in spite of oppression. John Huss and Jerome of Prague, two zealous reformers, were put to death. The councils of Constance and Florence were called to effect a reformation of the church, and to heal its dissensions, but in vain. Profligacy, indolence and superstition still characterized the ecclesiastics ; the church was divided by contending popes, and the conflicts of different sects and parties produced great confusion and bloodshed.

In the sixteenth century, the dissatisfaction which had long been secretly increasing, burst forth into open opposition to

the despotic usurpations and gross enormities of the popes, to the superstition and crimes of the priests, and to the general darkness and corruption of the church, in morals, doctrine and services. Thus arose the reformation under Luther, excited at first by the open traffic in indulgences, but soon directed more generally against the deep and wide-spread debasement of those who professed to be the spiritual leaders of the people.

This reformation, though commenced upwards of three centuries ago, is still in various respects, according to the judgment of many, very incomplete; nor is this surprising, when it is considered that the corruptions to be removed had been accumulating through fourteen or fifteen centuries, and had entrenched themselves deeply in the darkness, the pride and the self-interest of the natural heart.

The superstitions, extravagancies and enormities which have just been described, as the great features of the period when the tithe system was established, are surely sufficient to excite strong doubt and suspicion with respect to it; and especially so, when it is found to be at variance with the doctrine of the New Testament, and when the corrupt character of those in whom it originated was clearly predicted by the apostles. “For I know that, after my departure, shall grievous wolves enter in among you not sparing the flock: also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.”¹ “And through covetousness shall they, with feigned words, make merchandize of you.”² The prophetic descriptions of the apostacy or night of darkness, and of the coming of anti-christ, are given in clear and forcible terms. “For the day (of Christ) shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”—“And then shall that wicked be revealed,” “even he whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness,”³ &c.

Protestants generally consider that these prophecies, and

¹ Acts xx. 29, 30.

² 2 Peter ii. 3.

³ 2 Thess. ii. 3, 4; 1 Tim. iv. 1.

others to the like purport, were in great measure fulfilled, in the priestly exaltation and perversion of the truth, which mark the period just reviewed;¹ but they have not yet been induced fully to repudiate, or even to question, many of the views and practices, to which that lengthened night gave birth, and which are clearly at variance with the simple, unsophisticated principles of christianity laid down in the New Testament.

5th Section.—Founders and various Possessors of Tithes in England and Wales.

It has been shown that provision for the poor was the object of endowments in the Christian church, and that the system of tithes under the present dispensation originated and grew up, together with other corrupt practices, in a time of gross darkness, both religious and intellectual: also that designing pontiffs, covetous priests and ignorant superstitious princes were its chief authors, uniting together for their own selfish ends.

It must be remembered too, for what purposes tithes and other ecclesiastical claims were first imposed, and how the amount continued to be applied for many hundred years:—chiefly for the maintenance of popish priests, with their absurdities and errors; for purgations and exorcisms; for the celebration of the mass; for image worship; for prayers and dirges for the dead; for auricular confession; for upholding the seven sacraments, false miracles, and other erroneous and corrupt observances and notions; for the putting down, punishing and burning of heretics and Lollards; for the maintenance of swarms of idle, ignorant, covetous and grossly immoral ecclesiastics, in pomp, tyranny and sin! Strange it is that, when these superstitious absurdities are generally denounced, the chief wages originally provided for their support should still be enforced!

When Henry VIII. about the year 1534, by a reformation at first almost nominal, virtually installed himself as the Pope of England, by supplanting the Pope of Rome, instead of the tithes being abolished, and the amount returned to the owners of the land, or applied to general civil purposes, in consistency with

¹ See Newton's *Dissertations on the Prophecies, &c.*

the professed desire to remedy religious abuses, the whole continued to be absorbed by the clergy, by the impro priators, the king and his favourites.¹ For about thirteen years, during the remainder of his reign, they were applied, with almost equal superstition, to the condemners and persecutors of those who had but lately possessed them, and to the opposers of the papal authority. Most of the ecclesiastics, following the king, had thrown off the pope's supremacy, and embracing that of the monarch, continued to hold their livings; while some who resisted were displaced, and others appointed in their stead. But Henry so wavered to and fro in his religious professions, that the safety of both parties was by turns endangered, through his capricious and cruel temper!

During the short, but brighter reign of Edward VI., the tithes and other ecclesiastical property continued in the possession of protestant episcopal ministers, the reformation in doctrine made further progress, and had the king lived, greater advances would probably have taken place.

The accession of Queen Mary, in 1553, a period of despotic royalty, at once turned the tables, and the revenues were again handed over to the Catholic priests, who exercised their power with almost savage fury against their late superiors. More than 10,000 ministers, being at least two-thirds of the whole number in England, and including all who were married, were ejected from their livings!²

If it be asked what the tithe question has to do with these enormities, the answer is obvious. It was the "loaves and fishes," the golden remuneration, the decimal revenues, which constituted underneath the principal matter of contention, especially among the many worldly-minded, unprincipled and covetous, who turned with the breath of royal pleasure; while the spiritual and devout, the conscientious and the simple-hearted, lamented the spirit and motives with which these contentions were conducted, and often felt their effects in dreadful severities!

After five years of bitterness and bloodshed, Elizabeth restored Protestantism according to her own low apprehension of its

¹ Blackstone's *Commentaries*, 1, 8, 4.

² Smollett's *History*, vol. iv.; Simpson's *Plea for Religion*.

principles; when nearly all the parochial ministers retained the state endowments. Avaricious and time-serving, they repeatedly changed with the tide of royalty, adapting their profession and practice to the will of the ruling sovereign. Others probably judged, as Camden asserts, that they should better serve the interest of the papacy by retaining their positions. About 200 only are said to have sacrificed interest to principle, and to have given up their benefices.¹ Most of them received compensation, to the amount of one-fifth of their former incomes. Persecution was still employed, in a spirit of retaliation for past indignities, and though there was less of popish superstition, yet the reformation was very incomplete; those under the name of Puritans, who would have carried it farther, were oppressed and trampled upon; the wedge of gold and the Babylonish garment still polluted the camp; and the genuine and lowly spirit of the gospel made but little real progress.

Under popery, the poor had been sharers to some extent in the tithes and other ecclesiastical revenues, but after the reformation, when the religious houses were broken up, the indigent were deprived of all part, and suffered so severely, that stringent laws became necessary for their support, and against vagabondage and robbery, to which they had resorted for a maintenance. The number of executions under Henry VIII., on this account, is almost incredible. Thus protestantism seized the living of the poor, and was even more cruel in that respect than popery!

For eighty-eight years, through successive reigns, did the Protestant episcopal ministers continue to hold the pulpits and revenues; yet during all this period many religious persons, whose views were more simple and spiritual, were much discontented with the religious establishment. Royalty and hierarchy made however greater encroachments, and the spirit of dissatisfaction with the ecclesiastical and civil domination gradually increasing, produced at length, not a peaceful, firm and constitutional opposition, but violence, rebellion and civil war. These proceedings, totally at variance with the benign and gentle spirit of christianity, were so far successful for a time, as to obtain ultimately, by one step after another, the abolition of

¹ Simpson's Plea, Gray's Sermons at Bampton Lectures, Smollett's History, vol. iv.

episcopacy and royalty in England. The church lands were sold or leased, and the produce was applied to the expenses of the civil war and of the state; as well as to the augmentation of poor livings. The value of the bishops' lands forfeited and sold is said to have been a million sterling.¹ The Presbyterian ministers however, not less mindful of their own pecuniary interests than their predecessors, obtained orders of Parliament in 1644 and 1649, for establishing themselves *pro tempore*, and for still continuing the tithes already in their possession, till another maintenance equally large and honourable should be substituted. The former incumbents, numbering some thousands, were dispossessed, but allowed, on the principle acted on before, to retain a fifth part of their incomes for life. In Scotland, the tithes and church lands had already been vested in the crown, and otherwise applied.

This was a most favourable opportunity for the total extinction of the tithe system, and for the withdrawal of all state endowments of religion; but it was unhappily lost to the nation through the avarice, worldly-mindedness and ambition of the Presbyterian and Independent ministers, creating great dissatisfaction and surprise in many sincere and enlightened, but too sanguine men! These had been zealous in bringing about the revolution, with the full anticipation of a purer system of divine worship and church discipline; and, as one of its great results, the overthrow of all state protection and maintenance for particular sects.

In the general collection of statutes or Acts of Parliament, all those passed between 1640 and 1660 are omitted, because, though they had the force of law for the time being, they did not receive royal sanction, and being viewed with much distrust, were repealed in a mass at the restoration. Within that time the following ordinances and acts of the Commons were issued, among many others:—Ordinances² “For abolishing bishops and archbishops in England and Wales, and for settling their lands and possessions on trustees; to be sold for the use of the Commonwealth,” except the tithes, benefices, churches, &c.

¹ Neal's Puritans.

² 9th October, and 16th November, 1646; 23rd March, 1647; and 21st November, 1648.

Acts of the Commons¹ “for abolishing deans, chapters, canons, prebends and other similar offices; and for selling their lands and possessions.” But tithes, benefices, &c. were again excepted. By other acts² it was ordered that these, together with the first-fruits and tenths, should be vested in trustees, and employed “for providing maintenance for (‘godly and orthodox’) preaching ministers, and other pious uses,” and for the encouragement of schoolmasters and learning in England and Wales, to the amount of £20,000 per annum. Additional acts provided³ “for the better propagation and preaching of the gospel, and for the redress of grievances.” By them certain commissioners, termed “Triers,” were authorised to examine into charges against any parson, vicar, curate or schoolmaster, for ill conduct, malignancy or non-residence; and on conviction, to displace such persons, and recommend others, to be provided with fitting maintenance. The income of a minister not to exceed a hundred pounds, nor that of a schoolmaster forty pounds, with ten pounds per year to the ministers’ widows. Another act⁴ authorized the “sale of the manors and glebe lands, lately belonging to bishops, deans, chapters, &c.,” for the use of the Commonwealth. Commissioners or Triers were again appointed by ordinances,⁵ to grant certificates of “approbation of public preachers;” and others in each county, with certain ministers to assist them, “for the ejection of scandalous, insufficient and ignorant ministers and schoolmasters.” Provision was made by a further ordinance⁶ “for the better maintenance and encouragement of preaching ministers, for the union of parishes,” and “for the true payment of tithes and other duties.”

The Presbyterians continued uppermost for a few years, and in possession of most of the pulpits and revenues; but they greatly failed in executing those reforms which had been expected from them; and after violent political and religious contests, many of them were at length supplanted by the Independents. These professed to be utterly opposed to all state endowments of religion, and to its connexion with secular power. Some of the

¹ 30th April, 1649; and 30th July, 1649.

² 8th June, 1649; and 5th April, 1650.

³ 22nd February; and 1st March, 1649.

⁴ 16th October, 1650.

⁵ 20th March, 1653; and 29th August, 1654.

⁶ 9th August, 1647; and 2nd September, 1654.

church lands appropriated to ecclesiastical titles and offices were alienated and sold, and the work of further reformation was seriously debated. It made, however, very slow progress, in consequence of the opposition of self-interested and prejudiced parties.

When Oliver Cromwell was appointed Protector in 1653, one of the articles of government to which he swore and subscribed, was expressed in these words :—“That the Christian religion contained in the scriptures be held forth and recommended, as the public profession of these nations ; and that, as soon as may be, a provision, less subject to scruple and contention, and more certain than the present, be made, for the encouragement and maintenance of able and painful teachers, for instructing the people, for discovery and confutation of error, heresy, and whatever is contrary to sound doctrine : and that, until such provision be made, the present maintenance [viz. tithes] shall not be taken away or impeached.”¹ By this clause, the newly-established preachers, being secure of the continuance of the old system, to their great discredit sat down at ease, demanding tithes, and prosecuting with much severity those who conscientiously declined to pay them. Such remained the case during the power of these men, who had so loudly inveighed against episcopacy with its oppressions, and who therefore were culpable in a ten-fold degree, for abusing that authority and influence which they had acquired under pretences in a great measure vain. “Popery, prelacy,” &c. they excluded from toleration.

Milton, their able apologist, who had been a chief instrument in promoting their cause, and who was much opposed to a hierarchy under any name, complained loudly of their conduct in this respect ; and in his “Considerations on the most likely means to remove Hirelings out of the Church,” published in 1659, alluded to the maintenance of “church ministers,” as then “under public debate,” thus decidedly expressing his own sentiments :—“I hate that they, who have preached out bishops, prelates and canonists, should, in what serves their own ends, retain their false opinions, their pharisaical leaven, their avarice, and closely their ambition, their pluralities, their non-residences, their odious fees ; and use their legal and popish arguments for tithes :

¹ See Introduction to A. Pearson’s Great Case of Tithes ; Neal’s Puritans, vol. iv.

that Independents should take that name—and yet seek to be dependents on the magistrate for their maintenance; which two things, independence and state-hire in religion, can never consist long or certainly together! For magistrates, at one time or other, will pay none but such, whom, by their committees of examination, they find conformable to their interest and opinions; and hirelings will soon frame themselves to that interest and those opinions, which they see most pleasing to their pay-masters; and to seem right themselves, will force others as to the truth."

Again he says, "our new reformed English Presbyterian divines, against their own cited authors, and to the shame of their pretended reformation, would engross to themselves all tithes by statute; and, supported by their wilful obstinacy and desire of filthy lucre, would persuade a Christian magistracy and parliament to impose upon us a judaical, ceremonial law; and yet from that law be more irregular and unwarrantable, more complying with the covetous clergy, than popish kings and parliaments!"

Little, probably, did the illustrious author expect, when this was written, that within two or three years, the unfaithful Presbyterians and Independents would be displaced, and Episcopacy with the old order of things fully restored.

Charles II. being recalled to England and set on the throne in 1660, most of what had been done in religious matters for the preceding twenty years, was effaced as speedily and completely as possible; the bishops were re-established; and the lands, tithes and authority were restored to the Episcopal ministers. Charles had declared to the commissioners at Breda, that "liberty should be given to tender consciences, and that no man should be disquieted or called in question for differences of opinion in matters of religion, which should not disturb the peace of the kingdom." He also promised that all questions relating to the grants, sales and titles of estates, should be determined by parliament, alluding doubtless in part to ecclesiastical lands and revenues. It was not however to be expected, from the spirit of retaliation which recent injuries had excited, that anything would be left undone on the part of the Episcopalian. Accordingly, on the passing of the Act of Uniformity in 1662, notwithstanding the inconsistencies of many, about 2,000 ministers, chiefly Presbyterians, a considerable proportion of whom appear

to have been pious, excellent men, preferring principle to interest, were displaced from the pulpits on Bartholomew's day, without any provision or compensation, contrary to former precedents. Their sufferings were consequently great, while many of their places were filled by others who disgraced their profession ! Of 12,000 benefices, 3,000 or more are said at this time to have been inappropriate, 4165 sinecures, and many of the rest very ill occupied.¹ A severe persecution commenced against those who dissented, and the jails were filled with Nonconformists, Friends and others ; 8,000 of them are said to have perished in prison, during the following twenty-five years. The reign of James II., and the revolution which followed, gave increased liberty in matters of religion; but no steps were taken to remove the burthen of the tithe system, though the penalties for non-payment were diminished. These have been gradually softened, from the time of the Commonwealth to the present, being a period of about 190 years, during which the tithes have remained in the hands of the same body, a relic of a dark and superstitious age—to the injury, it is believed, of all parties and of the interests of true religion. In a new and less obnoxious mode, it is perhaps even more firmly riveted ; being invested with a more secular and uniform character ; but it is still essentially the same, in root, in principle, and in application, and is therefore open to the same conscientious objections.

And how are the millions per annum, derived from the ancient tithe system under its altered form, applied in England at the present time ? Are they used as formerly for sustaining the poor ? This object is provided for by a further direct charge on the public, nearly equal to the tithe rent-charge itself ! Are they employed for another of the original purposes—to maintain the houses or the services of the National worship ? These are also thrown on the resources of the country, to be upheld by a distinct levy, though not much exceeding one-tenth of the modern tithe ! Does the charge support the bishops, no less than the ministers, as it did at first ? To some extent it is certainly possessed by them, in addition to large estates, which are generally much more than sufficient of themselves, for the most honourable successor of James, Peter or Mark ! Does the charge satisfy the minister for officiating at marriages, burials and other individual

¹ Neal's Puritans.

services? For each of these also he expects a distinct fee, amounting in the whole to one-tenth of the general payment!

What, then, are the chief existing modes of the application of the tithe rent-charge? Some part goes to maintain in moderate circumstances the parochial ministers, who reside among the people, and endeavour more or less faithfully, according to their own views, to instruct and edify them. Another, and perhaps the largest part, is possessed by other resident ministers, who live in ease, luxury and worldly-mindedness, performing what are termed the regular duties, but either neglecting the private ones, or devolving as much as may be on a laborious and ill-paid curate! Another, and no inconsiderable part, goes to support men who live at a distance, where convenience, interest or pleasure calls them—who hold the ministerial appointment over several parishes at once, but who care for the fleece and its exchangeable value more than for the flock, and rarely pay them a visit! Only a small part comparatively falls into the hands of faithful hard-working men, who serve their richer brethren as curates. A very considerable proportion has been gradually acquired by the nobility of the land, by private families or individuals having no connexion with the church, by its chief dignitaries the archbishops or bishops, by universities or colleges, by deans or prebends of cathedrals. An extremely small portion is applied by such holders towards the spiritual instruction of the actual contributors, or the poor of their parishes! Thus selfish motives have gradually been allowed to operate, ecclesiastics have, it must be candidly acknowledged, assumed the name and the property of the church; and covetousness, having laid its rapacious hand on endowments for sacred purposes, has converted them into means for secularizing and perverting that holy religion, which they were injudiciously designed to establish.

6th Section.—Other considerations and circumstances relating to Ecclesiastical Tithes and Tithe rent-charge.

It has already been shown that no authority for the exaction of tithes is derived from the example or commands of Christ and his apostles; but it may be well to consider the subject further in its practical bearings, and under different points of view.

1st. Jewish example and ancient institution afford no claim for tithes or tithe rent-charge, payable to ministers alone.

If we could suppose for a moment that a right to demand and to receive tithes exists under the gospel, as in the legal dispensation, still they would not, by analogy, or Jewish example, be chiefly due to ministers of religion. On the contrary, they would be applicable to religious purposes generally; to the universal church, to the relief of the poor, and to other religious and benevolent objects; while a tenth of the tithes, or a hundredth part only of the increase of the land, would probably be the proportion of the ministers. According to this view of the subject therefore, and having regard to the original appropriation of tithes in England for several purposes, how great is the invasion of public and private right, when the ministers, though professing to be reformed from the evils of papacy, deprive the indigent of the patrimony which they formerly enjoyed, assume to themselves the whole tenth, and throw upon the community additional charges for special religious services, for the support of the bishops, of the poor, of the places of worship, of labours for the conversion of the heathen, for the education of the young, and for numberless other religious and charitable objects!

In the same text of Scripture, where God commands the tenth to be given to the Levites, he also commands that they shall not possess land or real estates, and that they shall content themselves with the tithes only. If therefore the people are obliged by this command to pay tithes, the ministers¹ are under the same obligation to take no possessions of inheritance.¹

2nd. Want of equity in the demands made on many of the payers.

The Apostle Paul said, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things;"² and it is evident that the scriptural and equitable principle is, that they to whom spiritual things are ministered, should, when needful, supply carnal or outward things. Therefore to demand these of all—many of whom cannot conscientiously accept the ministry—has no foundation in either scripture, justice or reason! On the contrary the injustice is palpable, when it is considered that the tithe rent-charge is possessed by one denomination, to the exclusion of all the rest; who constitute probably one-half of the population in England, and

¹ P. Sarpi on Benefices, chap. 21; Numbers, xviii.; Deut. xviii.

² Gal. vi. 6.

five-sixths of it in Ireland ; and who are thus compelled to support doctrines and services, to which they feel religious objections. This surely is in direct opposition to the memorable command of our Lord, “ Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye to them likewise.” Would that this first principle of Christian morals were fairly applied !

3rd. The original grants of tithes, whether free or compulsory.

Some have alleged that the various owners of land throughout the country spontaneously dedicated the tithe, or tenth part of the produce, to religious purposes for ever. This however, though true in certain instances, is not generally consistent with the evidence of history. The language of some of the royal grants or enactments, and the statements of contemporary writers, prove that large numbers contributed very unwillingly ; and that they were compelled to pay, in some cases by violence, and in others by threats of punishment, human and divine, for disobedience. In fact, so averse were many of the people to the imposition, that they resisted it in certain countries for very long periods, and were only brought to submission in the end, by the united efforts of the civil and ecclesiastical powers.¹

The monarchs, urged on by the bishops and priests, imposed the payment of tithes on the people, as has been before remarked, under the plea of their receiving in return essential religious services ; while at times the parliaments enforced the impost by their sanction. The difference in this respect is not material. Early history is full of complaints against the oppressions practised in ecclesiastical affairs. The governing authorities have overstepped their proper limits, by the enforcement of general and perpetual tithes for sectarian objects, thus invading the rights of conscience and the divine prerogative !

4th. No right vested in the ancient owners to impose such a charge on their posterity.

It has been said that the owners had as much right to give the tithes for ever, as they had to give their estates for ever. That they did not generally give the tithes willingly, has been already shown. But they had an acknowledged and perfect right to give their estates of their own free will, for any purpose which they conscientiously approved ; provided they did not thereby injure, in purse or conscience, the just claims of their

¹ Selden, 6, 4 ; Krantz's History ; Neander's History, 3rd, 1.

families, their friends or the public. The establishment of tithes however was very different, because in such a grant they actually disposed of a portion of the labour, skill and capital of their descendants. Had they chosen to give the whole land, or a tenth of the land, they might doubtless have done so, with the provision already mentioned. The alienation would then have been complete; their successors would not have been parties, nor burdened in conscience. But the tenth of the land would not have satisfied the tithe-claimant; the successive *nominal* owners must cultivate it for him, with their industry, skill and capital; they must manure, sow and reap it; they must pay the rates and taxes, stock it with cattle, incur the risk of failures and losses; and yield annually, to him and to his assigns, the whole produce of the tenth or an equivalent in money. All this makes every successive landowner a party in the matter, and compels him to uphold an object of which he may entirely disapprove. Had it been a tenth of the profits only, the wrong, though still existing, would have been less than when a tenth of the gross produce is claimed. In truth, the imposition is so oppressive in its bearing, so unjust in its character, and so inconsistent with the privileges of conscience, that it is evident no landowner has a natural and just right to enforce it on future generations; thus making them upholders of his own religious opinions, and depriving them, not only of the free exercise of individual judgment and conscience, but also of the legitimate fruits of their skill and industry!

5th. Personal tithes, with some exceptions, long since generally abolished, and the charge confined chiefly to the land and its cultivation.

Tithes in the old popish church were personal as well as prædial. Trade and employments had to contribute besides agriculture; the merchant and the menial servant, as well as the cultivator of the soil. Now, and for ages past, the burden on country districts having been in some measure shifted, and by degrees contracted in its bearing, rests almost wholly on the land, which supplies the food of man, and which therefore ought to be free from charges, in order to be able to furnish that food to all as cheaply as possible. This is especially due, seeing that most other countries have thrown off the oppressive impost, and that they possess therefore a great advantage over the

burdened agriculture of Britain. Personal tithes have been generally abolished; an application of equal measures must abolish the praedial also, under whatever change of name they now exist?¹

6th. Tithe-free lands.

Large portions of land in England have become free from demands for tithe rent-charge, through the operation of various causes.

When estates or manors belong to ecclesiastical bodies or offices, to colleges or universities, tithe-rent charge is rarely payable to other parties. Thus the lands of deans and chapters, of archbishoprics, bishoprics, &c. are generally exempt from all such claim. Some lands are also tithe-free by ancient prescription, and others by the custom of paying a small modus.

In some cases, when common lands have been enclosed and cultivated, a certain piece of land has been allotted to the minister of the parish by special agreement or act of parliament, in lieu of tithes or tithe rent-charge on the whole, the rest being exempted from the liability. By the general Tithe commutation Act, power was given, with certain limitations, to individuals and to parishes to make an arrangement of this sort with the tithe-claimant, and the power has been acted on in many cases.

When proprietors of land have purchased the tithes of lay-impropriators, such tithes have generally been merged in the freehold, or in another word extinguished; the lands being thus rendered, at a cost of ten, twelve, or more years' value of the tithe, free from all such claim in future.

In these cases, occupiers or purchasers, not being liable to the burden to which other lands are subject, naturally consent to

¹ Both the adventurers and the poor men engaged in the fishery, in some places on the coast of Cornwall, are compelled to pay tithe whenever the boats are put out, whether any fish are taken or not. One-twelfth of the profits or wages is claimed in some ports, in others a certain sum is demanded annually. Of course this tithe has not been commuted: if it had been, the rent-charge must have been laid on the ocean instead of the land. The payments to the vicar in an individual parish amounted, on one occasion, to the large sum of £600. Many expensive attempts have been made to resist this unreasonable demand in courts of law, but hitherto in vain, ancient custom, and not equity, being successfully pleaded in its favour, yet custom in the opposite direction is of little avail. The Bishop of Exeter, in the time of Edward I., received tithes of the stannaries or mines of Cornwall, as well as of large fish;—and a small annual sum is still paid to the Bishop by the Duchy.

pay higher amounts in the shape of rent or purchase money, just as they would do in cases of exemption from any other disadvantage or impost.

7th. Allowance alleged to be obtained in the purchase or rental of estates, no sufficient reason for paying the tithe rent-charge.

It is pleaded, with respect to tithes, that every purchaser of an estate knew and calculated the claim when he bought the land, and obtained it for a price proportionately less on that account; and that therefore he is justly bound to satisfy the demand. To this it may be replied, that if an estate when purchased were subject to a claim of a still more objectionable nature, as for the upholding of Mahomedan or idolatrous worship, the purchaser, knowing of its existence, would, by the same argument, be justly liable to pay it, however contrary to his conscientious views as a Christian. As such however he could not do so. In buying the land, he would resolve to shake off every objectionable claim as speedily as possible; and duty assuredly leads him, if a dissenter, to do so in the former case; to refuse the payment, and to submit to the penalty or loss arising from his refusal; at the same time to endeavour, in a Christian spirit, to obtain liberation from the impost, by promoting an alteration of the law.

But the truth is that every purchaser buys as cheaply as he can, and obtains the largest allowance he can for all the disadvantages, of whatever nature they may be, attending the article bought. It would be a grievous oppression, for the government of a country to prevent any man from purchasing the natural soil, except on conditions opposed to the just rights of conscience.

The same arguments apply to the farmer who takes an estate, knowing it to be subject to tithe rent-charge. He endeavours to obtain it at the lowest annual sum, taking into view all the incommodities and claims upon it. If (without intending any invidious comparison) one of these were known to be the frequent invasion of a band of robbers, he would not, on the ground of that knowledge, be equitably bound to submit to them: neither is he bound, it is conceived, to admit the less flagrant demand of the tithe claimant, though sanctioned by the law of the land.

8th. Progressive increase of tithe claims.

In numberless instances, the present owners of estates have inherited them from their ancestors, sometimes from remote periods, and during this time advances have often been made in the demands for tithes; the amount claimed, which was originally trifling, being gradually swollen, by repeated encroachments, to a very considerable sum; and the increase of the tithes being far greater than that in the prices of the produce. The value of livings generally is said to have increased in the proportion of from *one to ten*,¹ between the time of the Reformation and 1793, and the increase since must have been very large. Thus therefore, to the extent at least of that increase, the landowner or tenant has been in the position of a person, exposed for the *first* time to such an objectionable claim. The returns to the circular inquiries of the British Board of Agriculture, make the whole average tithe per acre, in 1790, 4s. 0½d.; in 1803, 5s. 3½d.; and in 1813, 7s. 9½d. It frequently amounts to one-fifth, one-fourth, and sometimes even to one-third, of the rent paid to the landlord!

9th. Comparative weight of the legal claim for tithe rent-charge.

The mere law of the land will not surely be a valid plea, or a sufficient ground for the claim to most Christians; since, as the authority of the law is merely that of man, and as matters of conscience, of which this is one, do not come within his proper province, the authority of the Lord of the conscience will be generally allowed to be much greater and more entitled to obedience. The Christian will feel bound however in such cases, though a dissenter, to yield a passive submission to the laws of his country, by bearing their consequences; but to testify against them and endeavour to procure their repeal, yet always by moral, temperate and constitutional means alone; when, as he believes, human laws are opposed to a higher law, and when therefore he cannot actively comply with them.

10th. Alleged right of property in ecclesiastical tithe rent-charge.

Some contend that the ministers of the several parishes, (or rather it should be said, the patrons who are often different) have bought the livings or benefices, giving the claim to tithe rent-charge; and that therefore it ought to be paid, as being their

¹ Rees' Cyclopaedia,—Article Church.

due and legal property. The old maxim however is, "Let the buyer beware!" Let him who would buy, or who holds such property, remember that there are very many who do not recognize the right, and that the law itself is accompanied with restrictions, which show the dubious and questionable nature of the claim. Human law may indeed create various kinds of property, which the divine law does not sanction; but to this last must be our ultimate appeal. In some of the United States of America, man has acquired by law a property in the persons of some of his fellow-men, in opposition to the laws of God. In Britain, the law gives to one class of men a property in the produce of other men's exertions and capital, for services which some of them cannot accept; the claim is therefore by nature invalid; since neither of these kinds of property can be conscientiously recognized as founded in justice or equity. On the contrary, both are manifestly at variance with those great natural principles of right to the fruits of his own honest personal exertions, which every man is at liberty to vindicate as a member of civil society, and still more so as belonging to an enlightened Christian community.

11th. Patrons of livings or benefices.

This class of persons, though occupying a most important and responsible position in the Anglican church, as well as in some foreign churches, is apt to be overlooked, probably because their powers are but rarely called into exercise. The benefice of every parish has its proprietor in reversion, termed its patron; and on the death of the incumbent minister, whose duty it has been to officiate as the parson of the parish, another is appointed or nominated, not now as formerly by the people, who in a religious sense are chiefly concerned, but by the patron alone, subject to confirmation by the bishop. The patron may have obtained the power by inheritance, by purchase, or by other modes of transfer; and he may transmit it to others in the same manner. The law against simony prohibits him from selling it when the benefice is vacant, but before it becomes so, or while held in reversion, he may dispose of the patronage like other freehold property. The crown claims the right of patronage in a large number of livings, the archbishops and bishops in others, and religious or secular bodies in others, but in the great majority it is held by private individuals. The officiating

ministers themselves are often the patrons, having purchased the livings when in the possession of former incumbents.

The old rotten system of borough patronage, subversive of the political constitution of the country, has fallen before the increasing light of the age : and shall this system of ecclesiastical patronage, which invades interests of a far more sacred character, be suffered much longer to diffuse its baneful influence ? This subject will be more fully examined in Chapter 21, "On Ecclesiastical Patronage."

12th. Various ecclesiastical officers or claimants of tithe rent-charge.

Every parochial place of worship in England is dedicated to some pretended "patron saint!" Connected with many parishes, there are, 1st. The patron of the living described under the last head, being either an individual or a corporate body, lay or ecclesiastical, and claiming the right to nominate the minister. 2nd. The impropriator, or lay-claimant of the great tithe rent-charge, being also either an individual or a corporation. 3rd. The farmer or lessee, for years or for lives, of the great tithe rent-charge under the party No. 2. 4th. The vicar, claiming the small tithe rent-charge, and officiating as minister of the parish. If however there is no impropriator, the minister of the parish is termed a rector, and receives all the tithe rent-charge, both great and small. 5th. The curate or curates assisting the minister, or acting for him if he is unequal to perform the services. Beside these is the parish clerk in every parish.

13th. Nice distinctions of the English law respecting simony, or the purchase of the ministerial office and emoluments.

Judge Blackstone says, that simony is the corrupt presentation of any one to an ecclesiastical benefice, for money, gift or reward ; being so called from the resemblance it is said to bear to the sin of Simon Magus; though he thinks that the purchase of holy orders (*viz.*, from the bishop) approaches nearer to that offence. A living or benefice procured by such means is forfeited on that occasion to the crown. By the canon law it is treated as a great crime, and being always accompanied with perjury, is so much the more heinous ; every presentee being solemnly sworn to have "made no simoniacal contract, payment or promise, directly or indirectly, by himself or any

other, to his knowledge or with his consent,' &c.¹ But ecclesiastical corruption has devised many subterfuges and evasions, to render such appointments a transferable property, and their purchase and sale a safe and an easy business, so that the instances are very notorious, in defiance of great Christian principles, and Acts of Parliament.

These acts, it appears, are rarely if ever enforced, but Blackstone asserts that modern prevailing usage calls aloud for putting them in execution. In 1699 Dr. Watson, bishop of "St. David's," was deprived of his see for simony, which he carried on unblushingly to a large extent. Other instances of the same kind have occurred; the offence being the sale of what are termed holy orders, and not of advowsons. But cases of the latter sort have also taken place, in open contravention of the law.

The following practices are regarded by the English law as simony.² For any one to purchase a presentation when the living has actually become vacant; for a clerk to bargain for the next presentation to a benefice for himself, the incumbent being sick and about to die; for him to purchase one, either in his own name or in another's, and to be thereupon presented. And also the procuring a benefice, by agreeing to cede to the patron some of the rights belonging to it. On the other hand, the following are deemed by the law not to be cases of simony: 1st, the purchase of a presentation by a father on behalf of his son; 2nd, the purchase by a clerk for himself in perpetuity, when not vacant; 3rd, a bond to pay money for charitable uses on receiving a presentation; 4th, a bond to resign in case of non-residence, or, on taking another living; or when the patron's son shall attain canonical age, or twenty-three years. These nice distinctions clearly show that the legislature has entertained considerable doubt of the propriety of sanctioning such transactions, and making them matters of pecuniary bargain; and that it had to contend with a mercenary, trading spirit in ministers of the established church, which required to be closely watched and restricted. How far success has attended these restrictions is another question!

To allow the sacred office of the ministry and the care of immortal souls to be thus bought and sold as a species of property,

¹ See 40th Canon of Anglican Church.

² See Blackstone and Paley.

is, it must be confessed, greatly to degrade the high spiritual calling ; and, notwithstanding all the excuses of common usage and polite phraseology, virtually to assimilate it to the attempts of Simon of old. That a purchase in reversion should be perfectly justifiable, while a purchase in immediate possession is a transgression of the law of Christ, is a distinction in judgment that carries no conviction to the simple, unprejudiced mind. The present inefficient laws against simony seem intended rather to preserve appearances by a show of disapprobation, than to abolish the actual buying and selling.

14th. Titles to land objectionable in many respects, as well as to tithes.

It is sometimes alleged that the original titles of land are in many cases very dubious and questionable, as well as the origin of tithes ; that neither the one nor the other will bear very close investigation ; and that what we have now to deal with is the present ownership and application. This comparison, however, is founded on a superficial view of the facts. With respect to land, there is in general no ancient adverse claimant, nor any other claimant that can be traced beside the party in possession ; if there be any question of disputed title may be fairly settled by legal tribunals. But in relation to tithe rent-charge, the case is widely different, since the patron has not as such, or ought not to have, any civil interest ; and another natural claimant exists, being the present landowner, who is the representative of the original owner and is generally known. The tithe receiver is at most only a lessee and is also liable to be dispossessed, according to former precedents, whenever the state may think fit.

15th. Tithes, or ecclesiastical tithe rent-charge, asserted to be public property.

Again it is contended that, although the tithes originally belonged to the landowner, yet in consequence of their immemorial severance and long alienation from him, he has now no right to them ; and that they are manifestly the property of the state. Doubtless the state has assumed a claim to them, and to deal with them as it thinks fit : and though the amount has been subtracted from the owners of the soil, yet if the rent-charge were applied to general purposes of indisputable benefit, of which they could fully approve, none could fairly refuse to pay the demand. While, however, the application to sectarian purposes

is retained, those who conscientiously object to it will not become reconciled to the payment, whether they be considered public or private ecclesiastical property.

16th. Distinction between the nature of ecclesiastical tithe rent-charge, and that of payments to the state.

For the payment of direct taxes to the government, or of rates for local purposes of a civil or strictly charitable nature, which are "things that are Cæsar's," although some of those purposes may not be free from objection, all the payers receive a return, in the protection of person and property, in the maintenance of order, and in the promotion of the general welfare and comfort of the people; such payments are justified by the example of our Lord himself. But for forced contributions to uphold certain ministers, tenets and forms of religion, all those who conscientiously disapprove of the character of these particular purposes receive no return whatever. Being of "the things that are God's," in which no man has a right to interfere, great injustice is inflicted on dissentients. This would have been more palpable, as before remarked, had the payments been exacted for the support of Mahomedanism, or heathen idolatry; but there is a violation of principle in each case, and the difference is only in the degree.

Between claims for the direct ecclesiastical purposes of a few, and claims by the state for the general civil purposes of all, there is a marked distinction. The command to "render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's," will, it is believed, justify and require the conscientious dissenter to withhold compliance from demands which he believes to infringe on the divine law, while he will also feel bound to uphold the authority of Cæsar in its legitimate province.

17th. Distinction between the nature of ecclesiastical tithe rent-charge, and that of rent for land to an ecclesiastical body or person.

Very slight reflection is sufficient to show that between these two demands there is a broad and clear distinction. The dissenter who pays the rent has the use of the land, as a fair and equitable consideration for his money, just in the same manner as if the land belonged to a private person: but for the ecclesiastical tithe or tithe rent-charge he can have no return whatever, without a violation of his conscience. When made upon him, there-

fore it may be pronounced to be an unreasonable and unjust demand.

18th. Application of state-provision to ministers of all religious persuasions decidedly objectionable.

If the tithe rent-charge could possibly be divided in fair proportions between all the religious denominations, there would still be ground of very serious objections. The false system of state endowments for religious purposes would remain, and even be established on a more specious and a broader basis; jealousies and contentions would be fostered; the principle of a hireling ministry would continue; the compulsory payments would be at variance with the gratuitous nature of the gospel; the call to ministerial appointments would be more extensively venal; the conscience would be burdened with the apprehension of supporting error; religion and its ministers in many sections would suffer, through the tendency to induce a self-exalting and temporizing character; and there would follow a yet more general alienation of the profession of Christianity, from the simple, sincere principle of the Messiah's spiritual kingdom.

7th Section.—On inappropriate Tithes, &c.

All tithes or tithe rent-charge are, as is well known, either ecclesiastical, inappropriate (or lay), or appropriate. The term *impropriation* is used, when an ecclesiastical benefice is (*impropre* or improperly) in the hands of a layman; and *appropriation*, when the living is appropriated to a bishop, college or religious house; though sometimes they are confounded, or the former class are called *lay appropriations*.

The monastic orders at a very early period succeeded, by various contrivances, and especially by alleging the claims of the poor, in obtaining possession of a great number of advowsons, benefices or livings, for the sake of the tithes, undertaking to provide for the discharge of the parochial duties. They also repaired the buildings for public worship, and in many instances paid annual acknowledgments or fees, to bishops and other ecclesiastical officers. "Thus," says Blackstone, "these appropriations became annexed to bishoprics, prebends, religious houses, nay even to nunneries and certain military orders, all

of which were deemed spiritual corporations.” Such bodies deputed one of their own number, as curate, deputy or vicar, to perform divine service, &c., his stipend being at their discretion. The appropriator was bound to find somebody; but this, through the indolence and irregularities of the monks and abbots, was often done in so scandalous a manner, and the parishes, as Blackstone states, suffered so much by neglect, that the legislature was forced repeatedly to interpose. It was enacted, in the reign of Richard II., about the year 1392, that in all appropriations the vicarage should be sufficiently endowed; and also that the bishop should ordain a competent sum, to be distributed annually among the poor parishioners, in compliance with the original principle.¹

The system of impropriations, or rather appropriations, is said to have begun with William the Conqueror, and to have extended within three centuries to more than a third of the benefices in England, and those the richest. By the time of the Reformation, another third was added, and many of the parishes were left altogether unserved, the monks and friars, and not laymen, being the chief holders.² Camden gives the number of appropriations as 3845, out of 9284 parishes in the reign of James I.

It had been expected that Henry VIII., when he suppressed the monastic institutions and withdrew the corporate capacity from the regular orders, would restore the tithes to the parochial ministers, or appropriate the whole revenues to other religious objects as he had promised to do. Their livings would, by law, have become disappropriated, had he not, by a clause in the Act, secured them to himself. “This,” says Blackstone, using very mild terms, “though perhaps scarcely defensible, was not without example; for the same had been done in former reigns, when the alien priories, or those occupied by foreigners, were dissolved and given to the crown. From these two roots have sprung all the lay appropriations or secular parsonages, whose tithes are generally termed ‘impropriate,’ they having been granted or sold from time to time to private individuals.”³

Hence it appears that all tithes, whether ecclesiastical or not; whether claimed by a rector, bishop, religious house, college,

¹ Commentaries, i. 2—5, &c.

² Blunt’s Reformation.

³ Commentaries, i. 11—5.

officer of state, or secular individual, had the same origin; the difference consisting chiefly in the variety of the parties claiming them. All possessed a sort of spiritual character, and could not, without a distinct transfer, pass with the land or merge into it. To some extent, but varying in degree in different parishes, this spiritual character still subsists in all the tithe-rent-charge. The tithes of most of the monasteries having been charged with some ecclesiastical services or stipends, the same conditions were generally retained in the disposal of them to private individuals or public bodies. Such are the repair of the chancel, the appointment and pay of a perpetual curate, the contribution to a vicar,¹ &c.

Many of the sequestered livings were applied by the king to his own purposes, or bestowed on his favourites; while others were sold to the nobles and gentry at easy prices, and the proceeds employed wholly or in part to extend the Episcopal establishment, by founding six new bishoprics, establishing deans and chapters in eight other sees, and augmenting the colleges and professorships at Oxford and Cambridge. These bishoprics were Westminster,² Oxford, Peterborough, Bristol, Chester, and Gloucester.

A few lay-impropriators have, at different periods, renounced their claims gratuitously in favour of ecclesiastical objects, and others have done the same on receiving compensation.

The report of the commissioners presented to Parliament in 1835 enumerates the following “Appropriations and Impropriations in England and Wales:”—

- 38 benefices possessed by the Crown.
- 385 by archbishops and bishops.
- 702 by deans and chapters, or ecclesiastical corporations aggregate.
- 438 by dignitaries and other ecclesiastical corporations sole.

1563 over.

¹ Of thirty-one lay impropriations in Cumberland, two are charged with small payments to the bishop, seven to vicars for perpetual curates, three are unknown, and nineteen appear to be free from any ecclesiastical obligation except the repair of the chancel.—*Richardson on Improper Tithes.*

² Westminster was converted by Queen Elizabeth into a deanry.

| | |
|------|---|
| 1563 | brought forward. |
| 281 | by universities, colleges and hospitals. |
| 2552 | by private persons (lay or ecclesiastical.) |
| 43 | by municipal corporations. |
| 121 | vicarages partly endowed with great tithes. |
| 132 | vicarages wholly endowed with great tithes. |

4692

These returns were apparently incomplete. Gregory, in his Dictionary of Arts and Sciences, stated that there were then 3845 impropriations in England alone.

8th Section—Commutation of Tithes in England, Wales and Ireland, into Tithe rent-charge.

The details of this measure, which, though very important, are often misunderstood, will, it is believed, be found correctly described as follows.

The commutation enacted by Parliament¹ for England and Wales in 1836, has made a great change in the tithe system, abolishing the payment of tithes, and substituting for them an annual tithe rent-charge, to be paid in money by the owner of the land, *to those parties who had heretofore received the tithes from the occupier.* The act does not extend to tithes of fisheries, mills or minerals; to other personal tithes, to Easter offerings, mortuaries, surplice fees, or money payments, except by mutual agreement. The city of London, and rates in other cities or large towns, are also excluded from the operation of the act.

The tithe rent-charge especially differs from tithes in being, with two or three exceptions, equally payable, whether the land be cultivated with one crop or another, or whether it be left wholly without cultivation: and therefore it does not depend on the amount of produce. The impost is laid on the landlord, not on the tenant; and is recoverable, not like tithes, by being taken in kind, but like rent, by distress. The amount of tithe rent-charge for each parish was calculated, according to the average tithe payments of the seven years preceding 1836, with liberty to the commissioners in fixing it, to increase or diminish the amount by one-fifth or less, at their discretion. The whole tithe

¹ 6 and 7 William IV., cap. 71.

rent-charge payable for each parish¹ was then apportioned on the several estates, and even in many parts on every field, according to their annual value respectively, as estimated at that time. It was next calculated how many bushels of wheat, barley, and oats (in equal quantities of each sort), that amount would purchase, according to the average prices of the last seven years: and in every future year an amount of rent-charge is to be levied in each parish, to be sufficient to purchase the same number of bushels, year after year, at the previous septennial average prices. The charge on each estate and field is always to retain the same proportion, however their relative values may change hereafter, a few peculiar crops excepted. The cost of the commutation has been very great.

Sundry Acts of Parliament, establishing compositions for tithes in Ireland, were passed between the years 1823 and 1832; and in 1838 another act² abolished these compositions, and established a rent-charge instead. This rent-charge was fixed at three-fourths of the amount of such compositions, and was declared to be payable by the party possessing the first estate of inheritance in the lands subject to it. The rent-charge is variable with the price of corn, in like manner as compositions for tithes; the tenants under existing leases were made liable for the amount of the rent-charge, but under all future agreements the liability rests on the landlord, unless in cases of special agreement to the contrary. The remedy for non-payment is by application to a court of equity, which appoints a receiver to take the rents, and to apply them in discharge of the claim. The process is, as may be supposed, an expensive one. The tithe rent-charge is generally lower than on similar land in England. In a large number of parishes the minister's office is much of a sinecure, there being very few or no hearers; he consequently receives the emolument, while he performs little, if any service.³ Church-cess (or church-rate) was abolished in Ireland in 1833; and in the same year the crown surrendered the claim to first-fruits.

¹ In some places, those called Easter dues, and other ecclesiastical payments, were commuted into a small tithe rent-charge, in the same manner.

² 1 and 2 Victoria, cap. 109.

³ Of 2,394 parishes in Ireland, 155 were returned as having no church nor a single Protestant inhabitant; and 895 parishes with less than fifty Protestants in each—men, women and children.—*Wade's Unreformed Abuses*.

It will be seen that the tithe rent-charge, when viewed with reference to political economy, possesses some advantages over the old system. Its amount is not affected, whether an estate be well or ill cultivated, which is an encouragement to good husbandry; but it may rise or fall from year to year, according to the prices of corn for each preceding seven years. It cannot be taken in kind on the ground, neither can it be increased at the will of the claimant, as heretofore has been often the case; the cause of disputes is therefore to a great extent removed. It is no longer tithe, but a rent-charge on the land. With these secular improvements however, the ecclesiastical demand remains in most respects the same. It is the same in origin, being a graft from the old papal stock; the same in character, being a charge on all for the satisfaction of a few: and the same in application, being the main support of the national hierarchy. In most instances too, the amount in England and Wales is larger than that of the former tithe; the commissioners having generally exercised their discretion in favour of the claimants. The consent of the patron was necessary to the commutation. It does not therefore appear that the ground of dissenters in refusing to pay the impost is removed; or that those who conscientiously object to tithes, or to compulsory hire for the ministry of the gospel, can feel at liberty to pay it under the new shape of a tithe rent-charge.¹

The ecclesiastical rent-charge is to be regarded, not as a money payment for public purposes, but as a main support and foundation of an unequal, oppressive, hierarchical establishment, retaining many corrupt doctrines and usages; and though the impost is mitigated in some of its characters, and altered in name and form, it is still substantially the same with the original antichristian tribute, and cannot be reconciled with the principles of the New Testament. There is ground to fear that, in its new and more secular shape, the tithe system has even spread its roots more deeply and widely in British institutions: and

¹ In some rural parishes, where no tithes had previously existed, and where the ministers received small fixed payments from the landowners, the commissioners for commutation employed their authority to establish a tithe rent-charge. This was particularly the case in one small parish, where a rent-charge was imposed for the first time, amounting to £600 a year, instead of a small payment of £70 a year, which had been the previous demand!

that, by the removal of some of its more obviously repulsive features, its abolition will be a more difficult and a more protracted work. This forms however no sufficient ground for inaction or despair. "Great is the truth and it will prevail!"

9th Section.—On First-fruits and Tenths.

This subject is closely connected with that of tithes.

The demand of first-fruits and tenths, from the so-called priests, was introduced by Alexander II., about 1070, in imitation of the Jewish practice, and was first made by the pope on the English clergy, in the reign of King John, about 1200, under the plea of the expenses incurred in the holy wars or crusades.

The first-fruits, *primitiae* or *annates*, consist of the whole profits or tithes, &c. of each benefice for the first year, according to an ancient low rate called the *liber regis*. They now amount to about £4,500 a year. The tenths, or *decimae*, are a tenth part of the annual produce of each benefice by the same valuation, and produce about £9,500 a year. Both these tributes were claimed and enforced by the popes, for many centuries, through a pretended analogy to the right of Aaron, the high-priest of the Jews, who received from the Levites the first-fruits and a tenth part of the tithes; these and other papal exactions were however loudly complained of.¹

At the time of the Reformation, about 1534, King Henry VIII. instead of extinguishing these tributes, transferred them from the pope to himself, as supreme head on earth of the English Church, under a new valuation; and by this valuation, which is contained in "*liber regis*," but is extremely low and unequal, the livings are still rated, notwithstanding the vast increase and changes in value. First-fruits in Ireland were abolished in 1833. About 4000, or nearly one-third of the livings in England and Wales, have been discharged at different times from the payment of first-fruits and tenths: 150 pay first-fruits annually by custom. Perpetual curacies are wholly exempt.

10th Section.—Queen Anne's Bounty.

The Protestant sovereigns of England continued to receive the first-fruits and tenths; but the amount was often grossly

¹ Blackstone, i. 8, 4.

misapplied for the favourites and dependents of the court. In the reign of Queen Anne, 1704, they were restored to the established church, in a new form of application, being vested in trustees for the augmentation of the smaller livings, under the name of "Queen Anne's Bounty." This appropriation has been confirmed and regulated by more recent statutes;¹ and the fund, originally about £16,000 a year, has been increased from time to time by parliamentary grants, by donations, and otherwise.²

Within about ten years from 1809, more than a million sterling was appropriated by Parliament for this purpose. The annual income, as returned to the House of Commons for the year 1848, was £183,034; and the disbursements, chiefly in loans, benefactions and expenses, were by the same return £178,767. A million and a half were granted by Parliament within forty years, for erecting new churches,—one million of which was voted in 1818—*independently of grants to this fund*. The present average of first-fruits and tenths is stated to be £14,000 a-year, while the interest of the parliamentary fund is still larger, and the benefactions nearly as much. Benefices under the clear yearly value of £50 were discharged by Queen Anne from the payment of first-fruits and tenths, and have since remained so.³

The economical management and use of this and other funds might have saved the country from further large demands for the purposes of the hierarchy; but a great deal is now swallowed up in the current expenses. The salaries of officers, at the three boards, of first-fruits, tenths and Queen Anne's bounty, are returned as £4083 per annum. The duties are mostly performed by deputies, and many abuses have crept in. The office of remembrancer or chief agent is a patent office or freehold, and has been repeatedly sold, at from £8,000 to £9,000.⁴

¹ 2 Anne, c. 11, 26; Henry VIII., c. 3; 27 Henry VIII., c. 20; 1 Elizabeth, c. 4.

² Burnet's History of his Own Times, &c. He appears to have been the chief mover in effecting the arrangement.

Livings, either under £10, or charged with fifteenths or tenths to the king, were generally exempted from the tenths to the pope; but these instances were few.

³ Blackstone's Commentaries, i. 8—4.

⁴ Report of Commission, 1837.

11th Section.—Ecclesiastical Commission.

In 1835, a commission of inquiry, consisting of five episcopal and seven lay members, was appointed by the British Government “to consider the state of the established church in England and Wales with reference to ecclesiastical duties and revenues.” In 1836, the appointment was made permanent, in order to establish two new dioceses, to re-arrange the others, and to re-distribute the episcopal revenues.

In 1840 a great change was made in this important commission: the number of members, including all the bishops, was enlarged to forty-nine, the clerical proportion being thirty. The former commissioners had held office “during pleasure;” but this limitation was now rescinded. Largely increased duties and powers were committed to them. The chief object for which the disposal of the property was placed under their control was declared to be “to make better provision for the cure of souls.” The schemes of the commissioners are laid before the Queen and Council, and orders in council are issued, which acquire the force of law.

A select committee was appointed by the House of Commons in 1848, to inquire into the composition and management of the commission, and reported several objections under both heads. They described the property vested in the commission as very large and increasing almost daily. Probably to avoid disputes, it is classed under two heads. The episcopal fund will have a disposable balance of £16,000 a-year; the common fund, a similar balance of about £300,000 a-year. Out of the episcopal fund had been paid, up to 1848, the sum of £93,276, for the augmentation of the less richly endowed sees, for providing new palaces, improving others, purchasing land for parks, &c., &c. The common fund is derived from the income of extinguished cathedral preferments, from the falling in of leases, &c., and is applied to increase the incomes of the smaller livings. The report of the committee shows that a great deal of jobbing and mismanagement has taken place.

The consolidation of this very important commission with the board of Queen Anne’s bounty, under an improved system of management, has been recommended as highly desirable. The present expenses amount to many thousands a year.¹ The Arch-

¹ Eccles. Comm. Report, Answer 2129.

bishop of Canterbury and others are represented in the report on church-rates, to have asserted that there are ecclesiastical funds, “which might be so far improved as to produce a million of money.” The property under the control of this commission was probably alluded to in this remark.¹

12th Section.—Complaints and efforts of reformers, in different ages and countries, against tithes and other pecuniary endowments of ministers.

In the sixth century, Gregory of Tours, commonly styled Saint Gregory, inveighed loudly against those ministers who made an ill use of the revenues of the church, as usurpers of the public goods, and destroyers of the poor whom they ought to feed. “When we bestow necessaries on the poor,” said he in his pastorals, “we restore to them their own, and we perform a work of justice rather than of mercy.” Very similar was the language of most writers on the claim of the poor to the goods of the church, for several hundred years, till the entire revenues came to be considered the property of the ecclesiastics.²

The well known Bede, in the eighth century, thus addressed the Archbishop of York: “Freely ye have received, freely give; provide neither gold nor silver. If therefore Christ ordered the apostles to preach the gospel freely, and did not permit them to receive gold or silver, or any payment of money, from those to whom they preached, what hazard, I would ask, must hang over those who do the contrary?”³

Alcuin, a learned ecclesiastic of York, who died in 804, remonstrated closely with the Emperor Charlemagne, on the employment of force against the heathen, in propagating the Christian profession with its ecclesiastical system, and especially the impost of tithes. He was earnest that ministers should not preach the word out of a love of gain, but that they should be “men of prayer and preaching, not *men of prey*;” and that they should remember the words of our Lord, “Freely ye have received, freely give.” “Let only the same pains be taken,” said he, “to preach to the Saxons the easy yoke and the light

¹ Evidence on Church-Rates, answer 2096.

² Sarpi on Benefices, chap. xxxi.

³ Bede's Works, by Giles, vol. ii.

burden of Christ, as are taken to collect the tithes from them or to punish the least transgression of the laws, and perhaps they would no longer be found to repel baptism with abhorrence." In a letter to Archbishop Arno, Alcuin says, "The tithes, as it is reported, have subverted the faith of the Saxons! Why is the yoke to be imposed on the necks of those ignorant people, which neither we nor our brethren have been able to bear?"¹ In reference also to the Avares or Huns, he says to the same prelate, "Be thou a preacher of piety, not an exacter of tithes!"²

King Edgar, about 970, a few generations after the establishment of tithes in England, in reference to the large dedications made to the church by his ancestors, reproaches the ecclesiastics for their usurpations, and scandalous misapplications of the revenues. His expostulations are well worthy of notice, and are addressed to Dunstan the monk, as follows :—

" My great-grandfather, as ye know, gave the tenth part of all his lands to churches and abbeys. My great-great-grandfather, Alfred of holy memory, did not spare his treasures or rents, that he might enrich the church. Your fatherhood is not ignorant how great things my grandfather, Edward the elder, gave to the churches. Remember with what gifts my father and his brothers enriched Christ's altars. Oh, father Dunstan ! behold my father looking on thee from that bright place of heaven ; hearken to his words thus lamenting :—' Oh, father Dunstan ! thou gavest me counsel to build abbeys and churches. I chose thee as a shepherd and bishop of my soul, and a keeper of my manners : when did I not obey thee ?—what treasures did I prefer to thy counsels ?—what possessions did I not despise if thou badest me ? If thou thoughtest meet to give anything to the poor or to churches, I deferred not. If thou complainedst that monks or clerks wanted anything, I supplied. Thou saidst that alms last for ever, and that none were more fruitful than those given to abbeys or churches ; for with them both God's servants are sustained, and that which remaineth is given to the poor.'

" Oh, worthy alms ! Oh, worthy price of the soul ! Oh, wholesome remedy of our sins ! which now stinketh in the sweet furs of the priests' concubines, with which they adorn their ears and deck their fingers, clothing their delicate bodies with silk and

¹ Neander's History, vol. iii., sect. 1.

² Ibid.

purple! Oh, father! is this the fruit of my alms, is this the effect of my desire and of thy promise? What wilt thou answer to this complaint of my fathers?¹

About the year 1000, Leutard, a Frenchman of eminence, declared that the payment of tithes was unnecessary and vain. He held some other opinions different from the usual doctrines of the age; by these means he acquired the name of heretic, and exposed himself to suffering, which appears to have shortened his days.²

During the darkness of the apostacy, but little evidence of the truth is to be expected; but, as light slowly increased, objections were made, from age to age, by numerous spiritually-minded Christians, against the conversion of offices in the church into temporal property, and against the exaction of money for fulfilling the customary religious rites. A council held at Rome, about 1180, decreed that the offices of the church should not be bought, sold or devised; and that every cathedral should have a master to teach children without payment. The Council of Rheims, under Calixtus II. about 1300, followed in the same course. These however, as far as appears, are somewhat rare exceptions to the general character of such councils.

Bernard, who was usually styled a "Saint," writing to Pope Eugenius in the twelfth century, says, "I fear no greater poison to happen unto thee than greedy desire of rule and dominion!" And in one of his sermons he remarks, "Truly the goods of the church are the patrimony of the poor; and whatsoever the ministers or stewards, not lords or possessors, take to themselves more than sufficient for a competent living, is taken away from the poor by sacrilegious cruelty."³

In the twelfth century lived Arnold of Brescia, a bold Italian ecclesiastic and reformer, who, though possessed of a turbulent spirit, had enlightened views of the avarice and corruptions that prevailed in the church. He declared that he had been commanded by the Lord to promulgate these views, and many cordially united in them. A work entitled "Opus Partitum," which is still extant, is supposed to have been written by him.

¹ Fox's *Acts and Mon.* vol. i.

² Radulphus Glaber, quoted by Selden, vi. 6.

³ Fox's *Acts and Mon.* vol. i.

The writer complains of the many abuses and enormities which existed—of the multitude of idle religious persons—of ill-advised promotions for gain or through interest—of the goods of the church being spent on luxuries and not on the poor, with other evils. He maintained that the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, and that the secular power of the church is an unprincipled corruption! The ruling authorities, not being able to tolerate his ardent zeal and close dealing, caused him to be put to death in 1155.¹

The Emperor Frederic, about 1160, complained loudly of the pride and covetousness which pervaded the church, and called on its rulers, either to submit to the secular power or to restore the possessions with which that power had endowed it; charging its officers with being prowlers for money, and insatiable with silver and gold!

About the same time a people arose, who bore a noble testimony for Christian truth, and proved their sincerity by great sufferings. Under the name of Albigenses, Waldenses, Bohemians, Poor Men of Lyons, Beghards, and other appellations in different countries, they were some of the earliest and most conspicuous witnesses against the evils of the church. Absurd practices and doctrines were falsely alleged against them, as against many other reformers, to bring them into disrepute; but it appears that, among other interesting sentiments, they held the following: "That the true church of Christ consists of all those who have a right faith, and that to such the keys of the church are given, to keep out the wolves and to appoint faithful pastors: also that the preaching of the word is free to all Christian men, called thereto by the Holy Spirit."² They objected to the payment of tithes, and said that the priests ought not to covet riches, but to be content with poverty. Their own pastors laboured for their subsistence like the apostles. They continued from the twelfth to the seventeenth century, and were often cruelly persecuted: many being put to death for their testimony against the superstitions, corruptions and vices of the ecclesiastics. Henry II., instigated by the clergy, treated

¹ Fox's *Acts and Mon.* vol. i., and Mosheim, vol. i.; Sarpi on *Benefices*, chap. xxxi.

² Fox's *Acts and Mon.*, and Mosheim.

with great inhumanity some of them who came into England, so that all appear to have perished.¹

It is greatly to be lamented, that these poor but enlightened people, instigated by the oppressions and cruelties with which they were harassed in their native valleys, were induced at length to depart from the meekness and long-suffering of which our Lord set so memorable an example, and to take up arms in their own defence. Unable to contend with the forces sent against them, they were overpowered after severe struggles, and lost much of their Christian devotedness, their moral standing, and for some time their existence as a united and distinct body. Their trials must be acknowledged to have been very severe ; yet if they had faithfully maintained patience, forbearance and firmness, they might, and we are warranted by Scripture in believing that they would, have been watched over and preserved by the great Head of the Church. A resort to force and violent resistance, not only lowered their religious position, but weakened their cause, and they fell an easy prey to their assailants, who had been rendered by the opposition so much the more furious !

About 1150, appeared in England a short but remarkable treatise, generally attributed to Geoffrey Chaucer, and entitled "Jack Upland ;" in which the covetousness and hypocrisy of the friars are keenly reprehended, in homely phraseology and ancient style, suited to the understandings of the country people of that time. It excited much attention, and commences thus :—"I, Jack Upland, make my mone to very God, and to all true in Christ, that Antichrist and his disciples deceive Christ's church, by many false figures, where-through many virtues been transposed to vices. But the felliest folk that ever Antichrist found, been last brought into the church, and in a wonder wise ; for they been of divers sects of Antichrist, sown of divers countries and kindreds. Neither the tillen, ne sowen, weeden, ne repen, wood, corn, ne grass, neither nothing that man should help, but only themselves their lives to sustain. And these men han all manner power of God, as they seein, in heaven and in yearth, to sell heaven and hell to whom that them liketh ; and these wretches weet never were to been themselves. And therefore, freer (or friar) in thine orders and rules being grounded on

¹ Milner, Mosheim, Jones, &c.

Goddis law, tell thou me Jack Upland that I aske of thee; and if thou be, or thinkest to be, on Christ's side, keep thy patience."

Among other questions, he puts the following, "Why say ye not the gospel in houses of (poor) bedred men, as ye do in rich men's, that mow go to church and hear the gospel? Why covet ye not to bury poor folk among you, sith that they bin most holy, as ye saine that ye been for your poverty? Why will ye not be at hir dirges, as ye have bin at rich men's, sith God praiseth him more than he doth other men? What is thy prayer worth, sith thou wilt take therefore? for all chapmen, ye need be most wise for dread of simony. What cause hast thou that thou wilt not preach the gospel, as God said that thou shouldest, sith it is the best lore and also our believe? Why be ye evil afraid that secular priests should preach the gospel, sith God himself hath bidden them? Why hate ye the gospel to be preached, sith ye be so much hold thereto? For ye win more by year with "in principio," then with all the rules that ever your patrons made; and in this, minstrels bin better then ye, for they contrarien not the mirths that they maken, but ye contrarien the gospel both in word and deed. Freer, what charity is this, to overcharge the people by mighty begging, under colour of preaching, or praying, or masses singing? sith holy writ biddeth not thus, but even the contrary; for all such ghostly deeds should be done freely as God yeveth them freely," &c., &c.¹

A chief offence of the pusillanimous King John of England,

¹ Fox's Acts and Mon. vol. i.

Chaucer, in his poetry, freely and forcibly reproved the avarice of the ecclesiastics. His ploughman thus complains of them:—

"Their tithing and their offering both
They clameith it by possession,
Thereof nil they none forgo,
But robbēn man by ransome."

And then of parish rectors:—

"For the tithing of a ducke,
Or an apple, or an aye, [scil. egg.]
They make men sware upon a boke,
Thus they foulēn Christ's fay.
* * * * *

He will have tithing and offering,
Maugre whosoever it grutch.

* * * * *

And small tithes they were fowle yshent."* [or blamed.]

* Selden's Tithes, chap. x.

in the sight of the pope, was his free reprehension of the unruliness and neglect of the clergy; and he carried it so far, as to order, about the year 1200, that those in certain dioceses, who did not perform their appointed services, should be deprived of their incomes and lands. Ecclesiastical influence prevailed; the imperious pope carried things with a high hand against him, and he was at length induced to make abject submission.

In the following reign of Henry III. the papal extortions being continued, to the extent of one-tenth, and in some instances one-fifth, of all the revenues of the "clergy and laity," strong remonstrances were made against them; and it was alleged that, in the many livings then given to Italians, "neither the old ordinances, nor relief of the poor, nor hospitality, nor any preaching of God's word, nor care of men's souls, nor service in the church, nor yet the walls of the churches, be kept up and maintained, as the law requireth."

An Italian, usually termed *Gulielmus de Sancto Amore*, of the University of Paris, is mentioned by Fox the Martyrologist, as a champion in the cause of truth; and to him is attributed a book "*De Periculis Ecclesiae*;" enumerating thirty-nine signs of false prophets. His views, as set forth in some of these, are, that false prophets, prefer traditions, vain and eloquent words, to the plain and spiritual truths of the scripture; that they preach for their own gain and honour, claiming to live of the gospel, and not by the labour of their own hands, without being sent by God; that they compel others to receive them; seek the favour of the world and luxurious living; receive bribes or reward from the wicked, boast vain gloriously, hate their enemies, follow false philosophy, &c., &c. For these and other plain truths, he was condemned as a heretic, and his writings were burnt, about 1280.¹

Many excellent persons, both men and women, notwithstanding the obloquy and false charges heaped upon them, in their faithfulness to the pure doctrines and spiritual character of christianity, bore testimony in that age of darkness and in different countries, against the corruptions with which they were surrounded. Most of them entertained a strong sense of the serious evils arising from the secular power possessed by the rulers of the church; from making religious services a source

¹ Fox's *Acts and Mon.* vol. i.

of pecuniary emolument; from superstitious notions relating to the bread and wine; from the observance of countless rites and ceremonies; and from the hypocrisy, avarice and other vices of the ecclesiastics.¹

About 1370, lived an eminent woman named Bridget, canonized even by the church of Rome as a saint and prophetess, though she severely reprobated its degeneracy and covetousness. "The clergy," said she, "have turned the commandments of God into two words, *Da pecuniam*, give money,"—a brief but faithful testimony! About the same time lived Catherine Senensis, a female of a similar spirit, who reprehended the prevailing evils, and prophesied distinctly of the Reformation. This had also been declared by Hildegardis, who lived about 200 years before, and who was esteemed a prophetess by the papists themselves.²

A short piece, entitled "The Prayer and Complaint of the Ploughman," which was published in England about the middle of the fourteenth century, is remarkable for the simplicity of its views, expressed in the antique style of that day; but still more so for its clear and faithful denunciation of the corruptions which disgraced the Christian name. The unscriptural assumption of the priesthood, the covetousness of the clergy, the superstitions connected with holy places, things and observances, the worldly character of the professing Christian Church, and its departure from the purity and lowliness of the gospel of Christ, are forcibly touched on and protested against. William Tyndal gave it increased publicity about 200 years after.³

The author thus writes:—"A Lord, he that clepeth himself thy vicar upon earth hath yordained an order of priests, to do thy service in church, to force thy lewd (lay or common) people insinging mattens, even-song and mass. And therefore he chargeth lewd men, in pain of cursing, to bring to his priests tithings and offerings, to finden his priests; and he clepeth that God's part, and due to priests that serven him in church!"

"But Lord, in the old law, the tithings of the lewd people ne were not due to priests, but to that other childer of Levi that serveden thee in the temple; and the priests hadden their part of sacrifices, and the first bygetten beasts and other things, as the

¹ See Mosheim, Milner Jones, and other ecclesiastical historians.

² Fox's *Acts and Mon.* vol. i.

³ Ibid.

law telleth. And Lord, St. Paul thy servant saith that the order of the priesthood of Aaron ceased in Christ’s coming, and the law of that priesthood. For Christ was end of sacrifices, yoffered upon the cross to the Father of heaven to bring man out of sin; and became himself a priest of Melchisedek’s order. For he was both king and priest, without beginning and end; and both the priesthood of Aaron and the law of that priesthood ben ychanged in the coming of Christ.

“And Lord, another great mischief there is now in the world, an hunger that Amos thy prophet speaketh of, that there shall comen on the earth not an hunger of bread, ne thrust of drink, but of hearing of God’s words. And thy sheep woulde be refreshed, but their shepheards taken of thy sheep their livelode, as tythings, &c., and liven themselves thereby where them liketh.

“Of such shepheards thou speaketh by Ezekiel thy prophet, and seyst, Woe to the shepheards of Israel, that feden themselves; for the flocks of sheep sholden be yfed of their shepheards; but ye eaten the milk, and clothen you with their wool, and the fat sheep ye slow, and my flock ye ne fede not, the sick sheep ye ne healed not, thilke that weren broken ye ne knit together, thilke that perished ye ne brought not agen, but ye ratled them with sternship and with power. And so the sheep be sprad abroad in devouring of all the beasts of the field.

“A Lord, thou were a good shepheard, for thou puttest thy soul for thy sheep. But Lord, thou teldest that thilke that comen not in by the door ben night-thieves and day-theenes; and a theefe, as thou seyst, cometh not but for to steal, to slain and to destroy. And Zechere the prophet saith, that thou wouldest reren up a shepheard unkunning; that ne wot not hele thy sheep that beth sick, ne seek thilke that beth lost. Upon his arm is a swerd and upon his right eye: his arm shall wax dry, and his right eye shall lese his light. Oh Lord, help, for thy sheep beth at great mischief in the shepheard’s defaut!

“But Lord, there cometh hired men, and they ne feden not thy sheep in thy plenteous lefew (or pasture) but feden thy sheep with svevens (or dreams) and false miracles and tales. But at thy truth they ne comen not; for Lord, I trow thou sendest them never. For have they hire of thy sheep, they ne careth but little of the feeding and keeping of thy sheep. Lord, of these hired men speaketh Jeremy the prophet, and thou seyst

that word by him, I ne send them not, and they ronne blive (or quickly) I ne speak unto them, and they propheciden.—From the least to the mest all they studien covetise, and from the prophet to the priest all they done gile.

“A Lord, here is much mischief and matere of sorrow, and yet there is more. For gif a lewd man would teach thy people truth of thy words, as he is yhold by thy commandment of charity, he shall be forboden and put in prison. And so Lord, thilke that have the key of conning have ylockt the truth of thy teaching under many wardes, and yhid it from thy children. But Lord, sith thy teaching is ycome from heaven above, our hope is, that with thy grace it shall break these wardes, and shew him to thy people, to kill both the hunger and thrust of the soul. And then shall no shepheard, ne no false hirid-man begile thy people no more. For by thy law I write, as thou iheightest (or promisedst) sometime, that from the least to the mest all they shullen knownen thy will, and weten (or know) how they shullen please thee evermore in certain. And leve Lord, gif it be thy will, help at this need, for there is none help but in thee!

“Lord, what dome (or right judgment) is it, to curse the lewd people for tythings, and not curse the parson that robbeth the people of tythings, and teacheth them not God’s law ; but feedeth them with painting of stone wall and songs of Latin that the people known not. Lord, how may any man segge that such shepherds, that loven more the wolle than the sheep, and feeden not thy sheep in body ne in soul, ne ben ravenors and thieves ? And who may segge that the maintenor of such shepheards ne is not a maintenor of thieves and robbers ? For they robbent, and sleen and destroyen ; they robbent thy sheep of the tenth part of their travel, and feeden themselves in ease. . . . O Lord, gif it be thy will, deliver thy sheep out of such shepheards’ ward, that retcheth not of thy sheep, so they hau their wolle to make themself rich. For thy sheep ben in great mischief, and foule accombred with their shepheards.—Therefore we lewd men prayen thee that thou wolt send us shepherds of thine own, that wolen feden thy flock in thy lefew and gon before themself ; and so written thy law in our hearts, that from the least to the most all they mayen knownen thee. And Lord, give our king and his lords heart to defenden thy true shepheards and thy sheep from out of the wolves’ mouths ; and grace to know

thee that art the true Christ, the Son of thy heavenly Father, from the antichrist, that is, the son of pride. And Lord, geve us thy poor sheep patience and strength to suffer for thy law the cruelty of the mischievous wolves. And Lord, as thou hast promised, shorten these days. Lord, we axen this now, for more need was there never !”¹

The Christian church generally, at this time, bore scarcely any resemblance to the primitive pattern left by Christ and his apostles. The holy scriptures were locked up, and the services performed, in an unknown tongue. Many of the benefices were granted by the popes at pleasure to their own favourites and dependents, who, being foreigners, knew not even the language of the countries where they held office. Under a vain semblance of uniformity of faith, and of one holy Catholic church, ignorance, superstition and immorality generally prevailed ; and a blind submission was paid to the mandates of the see of Rome, from which if any dared to dissent, they were imprisoned and in many cases put to death. Such was the vaunted meridian splendour of priestly rule and religious unity, under which the system of tithes and other corruptions became confirmed !

Yet Christian truth, there is reason to believe, was never left wholly without living witnesses, often hidden from public observation, and when discovered, despised and treated as heretics by the ruling powers ; but endeavouring through all to follow faithfully the footsteps of their divine master, who endured similar treatment from the high professors of his day, and who promised to be with his true disciples to the end of the world.

John Wycliffe, one of the greatest ornaments of his country, and sometimes termed “ the morning star of the reformation,” was born in Yorkshire in 1324. Raised up by the divine power, and endowed with eminent spiritual gifts, he became, through his superior piety, deep penetration, and great firmness, an enlightened and powerful reformer. At first he declaimed against the more obvious abuses and superstitions ; but his attention was soon drawn to the innate evils of the system itself. Translating the Bible into English, he took it for his guide, and recommended it to others. So many are the false charges brought against him, and his mode of defence consisted so much

¹ Fox’s Acts and Mon. vol. i. The objections of the writer of this piece—perhaps Wycliffe himself—to oaths and war were clear and decided.

more of denial than of plain luminous statements, that it is not very easy to ascertain his views on all points of Christian doctrine; in fact they altered and became more decided as he advanced in years. It is clear, however, that he defended the maintenance of pastors by voluntary contributions, opposing the system of religious endowments, and of tithes established by law. He asserted that "tithes are pure alms," and that they ought not to be exacted by the force of ecclesiastical censures or by the arm of the state; strongly recommending poverty and simplicity of living to the ministers of religion. This doctrine of Wicliffe gave more offence in England than any others which he promulgated; and the same may be remarked of others who have held it in succeeding ages. It was maintained by John Huss, and seems to have excited equal animosity in Bohemia, because it touched the priests on the tender ground of their temporalities.¹

Wicliffe's intrepidity gave great encouragement to that large portion of the community who secretly held similar sentiments. Most of the civil and even some of the ecclesiastical magnates of England were glad of such a champion. They had long been spoiled and trampled on; both temporal motives and higher considerations procured him exalted patronage and extensive support. He was the means, under the divine blessing, of impressing on the public mind a strong sense of the individual right of freedom of judgment; which sentiment, like a living seed, took deep root and sprang up largely; and though often cut down, burnt, or rooted up, the effects were not permitted to be utterly destroyed, but at length resulted in the great reformation, and in those further efforts, which have been employed from that time to the present, to restore the profession of christianity to its primitive freedom, simplicity and moral dignity!

After the death of Wicliffe in 1384, numerous eminent individuals in England and Germany, known by the name of Lollards, declared successively the same doctrines; and under a bloody statute of Henry IV. passed about 1400, many were publicly burned as heretics, for following those religious opinions: Wicliffe's translation of the scriptures being forbidden to be read on pain of death! Thus priestly usurpation and oppression prevailed on the secular power in England to inflict death on

¹ Gilpin's Life, Mosheim, Fox, &c.

pretence of religion, yet not without great opposition from the increasing light of the nation; and much Christian blood was spilt in the repeated struggles, between ecclesiastical tyranny on the one hand, and intellectual and moral independence on the other.

Walter Brute, a learned man of Hereford, bore a noble testimony for the truth about 1390, and appears to have been more enlightened than most of his contemporaries; yet like many others he was cruelly borne down by the combined force of ecclesiastical and civil authority, and subjected to severe imprisonment and penalties. Fox describes him as worthy of consideration, “for the mighty operation of God’s Spirit in him, for his mature knowledge, modest simplicity, valiant constancy, and for his learned tractations and manifold conflicts against God’s enemies.” On the subject of tithes he reasons thus:—“First: Christ, making an end of the priesthood of Aaron, doth also make a full end of the law belonging to that priesthood. Whereupon I marvel that your learned men do say, that Christian folks are bound to the small ceremony of the payment of tithes, and care nothing at all for the other ceremonies of the law. It is plain that tithes were given to the sons of Levi, for serving in the tabernacle and temple of the Lord; as the first-fruits, and parts of the sacrifices, &c. were given to the priests. But since the labour of those sacrifices ceased at the coming of Christ, how should those things be demanded which were ordained for that labour? And seeing that the first-fruits were not demanded of Christians, which first-fruits were then rather and sooner demanded than the tithes, why must the tithes be demanded, except perhaps that they are more in value than the first-fruits?

“Second: why are the lay-people bound to the payment of tithes, more than the Levites and the priests to the not having possession of realities and lordships among their brethren? seeing that the law, which saith that tithes ought to be given to the Levites, saith also to the Levites, You shall be contented with the offerings of the tithes, and have no other thing among your brethren. Wherefore, seeing that the priests are not bound to the not having temporal lordships, how are the lay-people bound to the payment of tithes?

“Thirdly: circumcision and other ceremonies of the law utterly ceased at the coming of Christ; but we may reason

that, if we are bound to tithing, we are bound to keep all the law. For to say that men are bound to one ceremony of the law, and not to the others, is not reasonable: either, therefore, we are bound to them all, or we are bound to none. It may be showed, by many reasons, that by the same old law men are not bound to pay tithes; but the things already said are sufficient.

"It seemeth to me that our men are in the same predicament with the Pharisees, leaving off the ceremonies and weightier matters of the law, and keeping only the commandment of tithing. When the apostles said to Christ, Behold, we leave all things and have followed thee, what then shall we have? he did not answer them, Tithes shall be paid you; neither did he promise them a temporal, but an everlasting reward in heaven, and taught them not to be careful for food or for apparel. In the first conversion of the Jews at Jerusalem, as the Acts of the Apostles declare, they had all things common; and to every one was division made, as need required. Wherefore, seeing that neither Christ nor any of the apostles commanded to pay tithes, it is manifest and plain that, neither by the law of Moses nor by Christ's law, Christian people are bound to pay them, although by the tradition of men they are bound."¹

In 1407, William Thorpe of Shropshire, an intrepid reformer, was accused to Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, of diffusing heretical opinions. An account of his examination and other circumstances, written chiefly by himself, and preserved by Tyndal, is quoted at length by Fox in his Martyrology. Among the many inquiries put to him and his answers, are the following:

"What sayst thou to this fourth point that is certified against thee, preaching openly and boldly in Shrewsbury that priests have no title to tithes?"

"And I said, 'Sir, I named there no word of tithes in my preaching; but after I was arrested, a man came to me in the prison, and asking me what I said of tithes: he said, 'Our

¹ This Walter Brute, or de Britte, is said to have been descended from an illustrious British family: hence greater pains were taken to influence him. His sentiments, in opposition to capital punishments and war, were fully expressed; as were those of William Thorpe and some others of that early period, although Fox endeavours to give a more limited construction to their language.

Acts and Mon. vol. i.; Lives of British Reformers.

prelates say, ‘that we are obliged to pay our tithes of all things that renew to us; and that they are accursed that withdraw any part wittingly.’ And I said to that man, as with my protestation I say now before you, that I wonder that any priest dare say men to be accursed, without the ground of God’s word. And the man said, ‘Sir, our priests say that they curse men thus by the authority of God’s law.’ And I said, ‘Sir, I know not where this sentence of cursing is authorised now in the bible. In the old law, which ended not fully till the time that Christ rose up again from death to life, God commanded tithes to be given to the Levites, for the great business and daily travel [or labour] that pertained to their office. But because the travel of the priests was mikel more easie and light than was the office of the Levites, God ordained the priests should take for their livelode, to do their office, the tenth part of those tithes that were given to the Levites. But now,’ I said, ‘in the new law, neither Christ, nor any of his apostles, took tithes of the people, nor commanded the people to pay tithes, neither to priests nor to deacons. But Christ taught the people to do alms, that is, works of mercy, to poor, needy men, of surplus which they had more than them needed. And thus,’ I said, ‘not of tithes, but of pure alms of the people, Christ lived and his apostles, when they were so busy in preaching of the word of God to the people, that they might not travel otherwise to get their livelode; but after Christ’s ascension, and when the apostles had received the Holy Ghost, they traveled with their hands to get their livelode, when they might do thus for busie preaching. Therefore, by example of himself, St. Paul teacheth all the priests of Christ to travail with their hands, when, for busie teaching of the people, they might thus do. And thus all these priests will do to the world’s end, whose priesthood God accepteth now, or will accept, or did in the apostles’ time and after their decease.

“One Pope Gregory ordained tithes first to be given to priests, now in the new law. But St. Paul, in his time, whose trace or trample all priests of God enforce them to follow, seeing the covetousness that was among the people, and desiring to destroy that foul sin, through the grace of God, and true virtuous living and example of himself, wrought, and taught all priests to follow him, as he followed Christ, patiently, willingly, and

gladly in high poverty; for certain, in whatsoever dignity and order any priest is, if he conform him not to follow Christ and his apostles, in wilful poverty and other heavenly virtues, and especially in true preaching of God's word, he is no more but a priest in name; for the work of every priest in such an one wanteth. This sentence approveth Augustine, Gregory, Chrysostom and Lincoln plainly.'

" And the Archbishop said to me, ' Thinkest thou this wholesome learning to sow openly or yet privily among the people? Certain this doctrine contrarieth plainly the ordinance of holy fathers, which have ordained, granted and licensed priests to be in divers degrees, and to live by tithes and offerings of the people, and by other duties.'

" And I said, ' Sir, if priests were now in measurable number, and lived virtuously, and taught busily and truly the word of God, by example of Christ and of his apostles, without tithes, offerings and other duties, that priests now challenge and take, the people would give them freely sufficient livelode.'

" And a clerk said to me, ' How wilt thou make this good, that the people will give freely to priests their livelode; since that now, by the law every priest can scarcely constrain the people to give them their livelode?'

" And I said, ' Sir, it is now no wonder though the people grudge to give priests their livelode that they ask. Mekill people know how that priests *should* live, and how that they live contrary to Christ and his apostles. Therefore the people is full heavy to pay, as they do, their temporal goods to parsons, and to other vicars and priests; which should be faithful dispensators of the parishes, goods, taking to themselves no more but a scarce living, of tithes, nor of offerings, by the ordinance of the common law. For whatsoever priests take of the people, be it tithe or offering, or any other duty or service, they ought to have thereof no more but a bare living; and to depart the residue to the poor men and women, specially of the parish of whom they take this temporal living. But the most deal of priests now wasteth their parishes' goods, and spendeth them at their own will after the world, in their vain lusts; so that in few places poor men have duly, as they should have, their own sustenance, neither of tithes, nor of offerings, nor of other large wages and foundations, that priests take of the

people in divers manners, above that they need for sustenance of meat and clothing : but the poor, needy people are forsaken and left of priests to be sustained of the parishioners, as if the priest took nothing of the parishioners to help them with.

" ' And thus, Sir, into over-great charges of the parishioners, they pay their temporal goods twice, when once might suffice, if priests were true dispensators. Also, Sir, the parishioners that pay their temporal goods, be they tithes or offerings, to priests that do not their office among them justly, are partners of every sin of those priests ; because that they sustain those priests' folly in their sin, with their temporal goods. If these things be well considered, what wonder is it, Sir, if the parishioners grudge against these dispensators ? '

" Then the Archbishop said to me, ' Thou that shouldest be judged and ruled by holy church, presumptuously thou deemest holy church to have erred, in the ordinance of tithes and other duties to be paid to priests. It shall be long ere thou thrive, lossel, [lost or worthless fellow] that thou despisest thy ghostly mother. How darest thou speak this, lossel, among the people ? Are not tithes given to priests to live by ? '

" And I said, ' Sir, St. Paul saith that tithes were given in the old law, to Levites and to priests that came of the lineage of Levi. But our priests, he saith, came not of the lineage of Levi, but of the lineage of Judah, to which Judah no tithes were promised to be given. And therefore Paul saith, since the priesthood is changed from Levi to Judah, it is necessary that changing also be made of the law. So that priests should live now without tithes and other duties that they claim, following Christ and his apostles in wilful poverty, as they have given them example. For since Christ lived all the time of his preaching by pure alms of the people, and by example of him his apostles lived in the same wise, or else by the travail of their hands, as it is said above ; every priest whose priesthood Christ approveth, knoweth well and confesseth in word and in work, that a disciple ought not to be above his master ; but it sufficeth to him to be as his master—simple and pure, meek and patient ; and by example especially of his master Christ, every priest should rule him in all his living ; and so after his cunning and power, a priest should busie him to inform and to rule whomsoever he might charitably.'

" And the Archbishop said to me, with a great spirit, ' God's curse have thou, and mine have thou, for this teaching ! for thou wouldest hereby make the old law more free and perfect than the new law. For thou sayst that it is lawful to Levites and to priests to take tithes in the old law, and so to enjoy their privileges ; but to us priests in the new law thou sayst it is not lawful to take tithes ; and thus thou givest to Levites of the old law more freedom than to priests of the new law.'

" And I said, ' Sir, I marvel that ye understand this plain text of Paul thus. Ye wot well that the Levites and priests in the old law that took tithes, were not so free nor so perfect as Christ and his apostles that took no tithes. And, Sir, there is a doctor—I think it is St. Hierom—that saith thus :—' The priests that challenge tithes now in the new law say in effect that Christ is not become man, nor that he hath yet suffered death for man's love.' Wherefore this doctor saith this sentence : since tithes were the heirs and wages limited to Levites and to priests of the old law, for bearing about of the tabernacle, and for slaying and flaying of beasts, and for burning of sacrifice, and for keeping of the temple, and for trumping of battle before the host of Israel, and other divers observances that pertained to their office ; those priests that will challenge or take tithes, deny that Christ is come in the flesh, and do the priests' office of the old law, for whom tithes were granted : for else, as this doctor saith, priests take now tithes wrongfully.'¹

" And the Archbishop said to his clerks, ' Heard you ever lossel speak thus ? Certain, this is the learning of them all—that wherever they come and they may be suffered, they enforce them to expugn the freedom of holy church.'

" And I said, ' Sir, why call ye the taking of tithes, and such other duties that priests now challenge wrongfully, the freedom of holy church ; since neither Christ nor his apostles challenged nor took such duties ? Therefore these takings of priests now, are not called justly the freedom of holy church ; but all such giving and taking ought to be called and holden the slanderous covetousness of men of the holy church ! '²

What became of this bold and enlightened man, William

¹ Founded on this and on other reasons, the yoke of tithes is properly termed "an antichristian yoke."

² Fox's Acts and Mon. vol. i.

Thorpe, does not appear; but he is supposed to have been immured in prison till he died. It is not often that the sentiments of any of the early reformers are stated so much at length; but if we may judge from the language of the bitter ecclesiastics who examined and reviled him, the opinions of most, and indeed “of them all,” were very similar on the subject of tithes.

The same superstitious persecuting Archbishop Arundel, about 1410, issued a mandate to the Bishop of London, enjoining the worship of the Virgin Mary, and the ringing of the bells both morning and evening in honour of her. After having occupied the see of Canterbury for eighteen years, and violently opposed the growing light of the age, he is said to have died miserably in 1414, of a virulent disease affecting his tongue, so that he could neither speak nor swallow.”¹

The illustrious Lord Cobham, already quoted as a man of remarkable firmness, being, about 1413, accused and examined before Arundel respecting his faith, did not hesitate to declare his entire dissent from the corrupt and covetous system prevailing in the Romish Church, which he boldly declared to be anti-christian. He was burnt in 1417, near Temple-bar.

John Huss, at the Council of Constance 1415, asserted his belief, in accordance with Wicliffe, that tithes were pure alms, and would have explained his sentiments and the grounds of them more fully, had he not been borne down with violence and prevented from doing so. He held that pecuniary payment for spiritual services to ministers of the church is to cause them to practise simony. In his treatise on tithes being alms, he showed that no just claim to them could exist, asserting that beggars might, with equal right, demand alms on the ground of long usage. He maintained that no man can reasonably affirm, either of himself or of any other, that he is the head of any particular church, but that this honour belongs to Christ alone.

He is said to have prophesied as follows:—“The church of God cannot be reduced (*i. e.* brought back) to its former dignity or reformed, before all things be made new; the truth whereof is plain by the temple of Solomon; like as the clergy and priests, so the people and laity; or else, until all such as are now addicted to avarice be converted and reclaimed, as well the people as clergy and priests. Albeit, as my mind now giveth

¹ Fox's Acts and Mon. vol. i.

me, I believe rather the first; that is, that there shall rise a new people, formed after the new man, which is created after God. Of the which people new clerks and new priests shall come and be taken, which all shall hate covetousness and the glory of this life, hastening to a heavenly conversation. Notwithstanding, all these things shall come to pass and be brought by little and little, in order of times dispensed of God for the same purpose; while the carnal people and carnal priests successively and in time shall fall away, and be consumed as with the moth."¹

The well-known Jerome of Prague, among other great truths, testified that, "forasmuch as patrimonies of the churches were given first to the poor, then for hospitality, and thirdly to the reparations of the churches, it was a grief to see the same mispent, and cast away upon things unseeming the Christian religion."²

About 1417, John Zisca, a Bohemian nobleman, being convinced of the truth of the doctrines maintained by John Huss and Jerome of Prague, and anxious to avenge their cruel treatment and death, was unhappily misled by a spirit of resistance, and incited his countrymen to take up arms against their persecutors. Many battles and much loss of life ensued, till at length Zisca was overpowered and died. This epitaph was written for him — "John Zisca a Bohemian, enemy to all wicked and covetous priests, but with a godly zeal!"³

Pope Martin V. having issued a furious bull and inquisition against all heretics, the Bohemians, soon after the death of Zisca, addressed a "Christian exhortation to kings and princes," to stir them up to zeal in the cause of true religion, and to excite their sympathy and active assistance on their own behalf. To this they added certain articles for consideration; some of which, directed against the corrupt practices of the age, are these:

"1st. That when bishops ordain priests, they do it not, except he that is to be made priest have sufficient livings, either inheritance left him of his parents or of benefices: whereas Christ would that priests should be poor, forasmuch as it is enough for the scholar to be as his master, and for the servant to be as his Lord; but the bishops will that they should be rich upon earth, which is unjust before the Lord.

¹ Fox's Acts and Mon. vol. i.

² Ibid.

³ Fox's Acts and Mon.; Gilpin's Life, &c.

" 2nd. That bishops take money of such as are ordained; but St. Peter sharply rebuked Simon Magus when he would have given him money, as it is written in the eighth of Acts.

" 3rd. That they which come to be priests enter not into their priesthood for the service of God, to preach and increase it, so that the people may be edified and made better; but rather for an idle life, that they may eat well and drink well, and that they may be honoured and reverenced upon earth.

" 7th. That they are covetous, from the highest to the lowest; and for covetousness they preach many foolish deeds and manifest lies, and sell the holy sacraments, which is a great heresy, for God commanded that they should give freely.

" 15th. That they receive tithes of men, and will of right have them, and preach and say that men are bound to give them tithes; but therein they say falsely, for they cannot prove by the New Testament that our Lord Jesus Christ commanded it; and his disciples warned no man to do so, neither did themselves receive them. But although, in the Old Testament, it was commanded to give tithes, yet it cannot thereby be proved that Christian men are bound thereto; for this precept of the Old Testament had an end in the first year [or rather at the death] of our Lord Jesus Christ, like the precept of circumcision. Wherefore, beloved, consider and see how your bishops seduce you, and shut your eyes with things that have no proof. Christ saith in the eleventh of Luke, ' Give alms of those things that remain : ' he said not ' Give the tenth of the goods which ye possess,' but, ' Give alms.' But when they hear the word, they may say, as the lawyer said to Christ, ' Master, when thou sayest so, thou givest offence.' "¹

About 1424, great persecution was excited in Norfolk and Suffolk against persons accused as Lollards, and many of them suffered death in consequence. Among other doctrines, they held the following:—that curates should not take tithes of their parishioners; but that such tithes should be divided amongst the poor: and that every true Christian man is a priest to God.²

Even Cardinal Cajetan, about 1500, acknowledges that the law of Tithes under the New Testament would be wrong, and if beyond an honourable maintenance of the ministers of God,

¹ Fox's *Acts and Mon.* vol. i.

² *Ibid.*

so great an affluence to one would injure the community, except he consider himself as the father of the poor.¹

Richard Hunne of London, Merchant Tailor, was hung in prison as a heretic, 1514. Among other articles charged against him, the first is that he had taught publicly “against the laws of Almighty God, that tithes or paying of tithes, was never ordained to be due [under the gospel] save only by the covetousness of priests.”²

About this time, Carp, a Russian deacon, accused the higher ranks of the Greek clergy of selling ecclesiastical offices, and of having corrupted the church to such a degree, that the presence of the Holy Ghost was no more to be found in her ordinances. Large numbers adopted his sentiments, and suffered severe persecutions.³

In a libel or small book, addressed to the king by Simon Fish of London in 1528, and entitled “The Supplication of Beggars,” the intolerable oppression of the ecclesiastics, through their demands for dues and tithes, is thus forcibly complained of:—
“ Who is able to number this idle, ravenous sect; which, setting aside all labour, have begged so importunately, that they have gotten into their hands more than the third part of all your realm? The goodliest lordships, manors, lands and territories are theirs. Besides these, they have the tenth part of all the corn, meadow, pasture, grass, wood, colts, calves, lambs, pigs, geese and chickens; over and besides the tenth part of every servant’s wages, the tenth part of wool, milk, honey, wax, cheese and butter. Yea, and they look so narrowly upon their profits, that the poor wife must be countable to them for every tenth egg, or else she getteth not her rights at Easter, and shall be taken as a heretic. Hereto have they their form of offering days. What money pull they in, by probates of testaments, privy tithes, and by men’s offerings to their pilgrimages, and at their first masses! For every man and child that is buried, somewhat must be paid for masses and dirges to be sung for them, or else they will accuse their friends and executors of heresy! What money they get by mortuaries, by hearing of confessions! (and yet they keep thereof no counsel) by hallowing the churches, altars, super-

¹ Sarpi on Benefices, chap. lii.

² Fox’s Acts and Mon. vol. ii.

³ Pinkerton’s Greek Church.

altars, chapels and bells ; by cursing of men, and absolving them again for money ! What a multitude of money gather the pardoners in a year ! how much money get the summers by extortion, by asciting the people to the commissaries' court, and afterward releasing the appearants for money ! Finally, the infinite number of begging friars—what get they in a year ? Oh, grievous and painful exaction, thus yearly to be paid ; from which the people of your noble predecessors, the kings of the ancient Britons, ever stood free ! And this will they have, or else they will procure him that will not give it to them to be taken as a heretic. Consider then, whether these sums draw nigh unto the half of the whole substance of the realm or not ; so shall ye find that it draweth far above ?¹ A fearful picture truly of ecclesiastical oppression !

Sir Thomas More and others answered this book by another, professing to be “ a supplication from the souls in purgatory,” and pleading for the ecclesiastics ; but the strongest arguments it contained were those of might.

In the fourteenth century Europe was visited by earthquakes, and these were succeeded in 1349 by a pestilence, which is said to have swept away one-half of its inhabitants. Knighton asserts that before this plague a curate might be hired for four or five marks a year, or for two marks and his board ; but after it, so few priests were left, and the people were so much more in earnest about religion, that twenty marks, or about £14 sterling were demanded as salary.²

By a constitution of Archbishop Islip, it was ordered that curates serving a cure should be content with six marks a year ; but by Archbishop Sudbury this was enlarged to eight marks, or their board and four marks, by reason of the difference of times. An Act of Queen Anne (xii., 2—12) directed the pay to be not less than £20, nor more than £50 per year, as the bishop should see fit.³ The salaries of perpetual curates are fixed.

After King Henry VIII. had thrown off the authority of the see of Rome, and had declared himself supreme head on earth of the Church of England, he promulgated, at different times,

¹ Fox, vol. ii.

² Pictorial History of England.

³ Burn's Ecclesiastical Law.

injunctions and articles for the reformation of the church. In a statement of these, issued in 1536, the following appears:—
“ Furthermore, because the goods of the church are called the goods of the poor, and in these days nothing is less seen than the poor to be sustained with the same; all parsons, vicars, prebendaries, and other beneficed men within this deanery, not being resident upon their benefices, which may dispend yearly £20 or above, either within this deanery or elsewhere, shall distribute hereafter yearly amongst their poor parishioners or other inhabitants, in the presence of the churchwardens or some other honest men of the parish, the fortieth part of the fruits and revenues of their said benefices; lest they be worthily noted of ingratitude, which, reserving so many parts to themselves, cannot vouchsafe to impart the fortieth portion thereof amongst the poor people of that parish, that is so fruitful and profitable unto them.”

Every beneficed man, having £100 yearly, was commanded by the king to provide for one scholar at the university, and so in proportion to his income if larger; and it was ordered “ That all parsons, vicars and clerks, having churches, chapels or mansions, should bestow yearly upon the same, being in decay, the fifth part of their benefices, till they should be fully repaired; and the same so repaired should always keep and maintain in good estate.”¹

For many centuries, the duty of giving instruction to the children of the parish was held to be incumbent on every minister. The twenty-sixth ecclesiastical law of Canute directs that “the bishops shall willingly teach schools and instruct;” and the twentieth canon of Theodulf decreed that “every priest have a school in his house.” “If any good man will send his children to the priest,” says another canon, “he ought to teach them willingly, not expecting any reward from their relations, except what they voluntarily give.” This appears to have been the origin of the collegiate or grammar-schools.²

A strong and growing feeling evidently existed in many parts of the nation against the exaction of tithes, as appears from the following preamble to the Act of the 32nd of Henry VIII. chapter 7th:—“Many persons in sundry counties and places of

¹ Fox's *Acts and Mon.* vol. ii.

² Whitaker's *History of Manchester.*

this realm, and other the king's dominions, not regarding their duties to Almighty God, and to the king our sovereign lord, but in few years past more contemptuously and commonly presuming to offend, and infringe the good and wholesome laws of this realm, and gracious commandments of our said sovereign lord, than in times past hath been seen or known, have not letted to subtract or withdraw the lawful and accustomed tithes of corn, hay, pasturages, and other sort of tithes and oblations, commonly due to the owner of the parsonages, vicarages, and other ecclesiastical places;" therefore, &c. &c.¹

Paolo Sarpi already quoted, or "Father Paul" as he is usually termed, was a learned ecclesiastic of Venice, where he died in 1623. His investigations into the origin and nature of ecclesiastical benefices and revenues gave him a clear insight into the shameless avarice and impositions of the rulers of the church; and he exposed with much learning and eloquence the baseless superstructure of tithes, and the contentions between the ecclesiastical and civil authorities, for the spoils of the people and the patronage of bishoprics and livings.² "Unlike the inspectors of the Jewish sanctuary, who said to Moses, 'The people bring much more than is enough,' whereupon they were restrained from bringing: the church," said he, "now knows no limits: where will its acquisitions end, and who will say the people have given enough?"

To the foregoing might be added many other testimonies, if time and space permitted or necessity required; but those already quoted are presumed to be ample, to show that, from a very early period, eminent witnesses have been raised up age after age, who have testified against the system of tithes, and the many peculations which covetousness had introduced into the professing church of Christ. There is little doubt that many further evidences would have been collected and preserved, if the historians themselves had had similar views, and had not been interested in withholding such evidence, and maintaining the exaction of pecuniary compensation for religious services. Many of the martyrs were deeply impressed with a sense of the practical evils still prevailing in the church, by which merchandize was made of religion, and secular power and influence were

¹ Collection of Statutes.

² See his Treatise on Ecclesiastical Benefices and Revenues, chap. liii., &c.

lodged in the hands of the ecclesiastics. Some of those good men, with their latest breath, expressed their desires that the work of reformation might not stop short, but be fully carried out and completed by the removal of the remaining corruptions. To this effect were some memorable words of Dr. Barnes of Cambridge, who was burnt in Smithfield in 1541, as a heretic, with two others. Among several requests which he made to the sheriff just before he suffered, is this: "I require you," said he, "to have me commended unto the king's grace; and to show him that where his grace hath received into his hands all the goods and substance of the abbeys, I deem that it is well done that all such superstition be clean taken away. But his grace is made a whole king, and obeyed in his whole realm as a king (which none of his ancestors that reigned before him ever had been); and *that* through the preaching of us, and such other wretches as we are, which have applied our whole studies, and given ourselves for the setting forth of the same, and this is now our reward! Well, it maketh no matter; now he reigneth among you, I pray God long he may live and reign! Would to God it may please his grace to bestow the said goods, or some of them, to the comfort of his *poor* subjects, which surely have great need of them! I desire that his grace would set forth Christ's true religion, and seeing he hath begun, go forward and make an end; for many things have been done, but *much more is to do*; and that it would please his grace to look on God's word himself; for it hath been obscured with many traditions invented of our own brains!"¹

"Lord, open the king of England's eyes," was one of the last petitions of the enlightened William Tyndal, when brought to the stake at Antwerp in 1536.

Jon Fox, the pious and laborious martyrologist, often quoted in these pages, thus writes of the state of the reformed church in the time of Elizabeth: "Covetousness robs and spoils; benefices are bought and sold; priests grow cold, and would they were cold indeed; but now many are neither cold nor hot. The pulpits are silenced; Christ's sheepfold is fleeced not fed; the harvest is despised!"²

The concurrent testimony of the illustrious John Milton, about the year 1658, must not be overlooked, being expressed with much force and clearness.

¹ Fox, vol. ii.

² Strype's Parker, Puritans in England.

" He, who by the law brings tithes into the gospel, brings in withal a sacrifice and an altar, without which tithes by that law were unsanctified and polluted ; and therefore they were never thought of in the first Christian times, till ceremonies, altars and oblations had been brought back, by a more ancient corruption. And yet the Jews, ever since their temple was destroyed, though they have rabbies and teachers of their law, pay no tithes ; as having no Levites to whom, no temple where to pay them, no altar whereon to hallow them ; which argues that the Jews themselves never thought tithes moral, but ceremonial only. That Christians therefore should take them up, when Jews have laid them down, must needs be very absurd and preposterous !

" Certainly, if Christ and his apostles had approved of tithes, they would, either by scripture or by tradition, have recommended them to the church, and that would soon have appeared in the practice of the primitive and the next ages ; but for the first three hundred years and more, in all the ecclesiastical story, I find no such doctrine or example ; though error by that time had brought back again priests, altars and oblations, and in many other points of religion had miserably Judaized the church. Hence those ancient reformed churches of the Waldenses denied that tithes were to be given, or that they were ever given in the primitive church. Thus far has the church always been from the approving of tithes, whether in her prime or in her most ancient reformation."¹

Following down the series of past ages,—lastly, but not least clearly or consistently, has the religious Society of Friends, dating from about 1650, borne a continued testimony against tithes. George Fox, generally considered the founder of this body, living in a period of serious and extraordinary inquiry on matters of religion, was early brought to perceive the inconsistency of this impost with the nature of the gospel dispensation ; and deeply felt, with many preceding reformers, that state-hire for ministers of Christ was a main root of the secular spirit, the contentions and other evils, which disfigured the Christian religion, impaired its vitality, and blighted its good fruits. " Oh ! the vast sums of money," said he, " that are got by the trade of selling the scriptures, and by preaching, from the highest bishop to the lowest priest ! What one trade in the world is comparable to it ? Notwithstanding the scriptures were given

¹ Considerations on Hirelings.

forth freely, and Christ commanded his ministers to preach freely, and the prophets and apostles denounced against all covetous hirelings and diviners for money!"¹

Both he and the other early members of the body expressed themselves very decidedly on these subjects, and what is still more, they acted consistently, and refused the payment of all compulsory ecclesiastical demands. But their conduct is well worthy of commendation in this respect, that they were neither betrayed into acts of violence on the one hand, nor could they be compelled to yield against their consciences on the other. For their steady and uncompromising firmness in this and other matters, they suffered from the successive ruling powers cruel whippings, severe fines, imprisonments, banishments, and in a few cases the awful penalty of death! To their undaunted but peaceable opposition to this and other usurpations, the large amount of religious liberty now enjoyed in Britain is to a great extent to be attributed. Had other dissentients maintained an equal amount of zeal and courage, of patience and meekness, there can be no doubt that tithes and religious establishments founded on compulsion, would long ere this have been known to Englishmen only in the history of the past!

The Italian reformers speak strongly on these points.

"There are clergymen in our prostrate country who are mere sacerdotal tradesmen!" Thus spoke the indignant Gavazzi in 1851, of the venal and reckless character of the ministry in his own native Italy. "They say 'hush,' if you whisper the word *abuse*! They say 'let the gangrene go on; let corruption eat into the flesh; we in the mean time eat, drink, and make merry in the lazarus-house, the church of the living God! Or, like sailors in a plague-ship, with 'Peter at the helm,' so that our rations are served out regularly, let the crew and all perish in the destruction which we cannot avert!'"

"The shop," says he, "was at the bottom of all the priestly devices;—both the pence of the poor and the ducats of opulent ignorance were the aim of their devout contrivances! The civil power has often had to interfere to prevent sanguinary collisions between rival religious processions!"²

"I know it is written," says Achilli in 1850, "that the labourer is worthy of his hire, and the priest has been accus-

¹ Journal of his Life.

² Gavazzi's Lectures.

tomed to live, as they term it, by the altar. But this which is a sound doctrine, becomes objectionable when it is made a dominant principle—the axle on which the wheel turns. The minister who serves the gospel is maintained by those to whom he dispenses its truths; but he is not equally to be so maintained on the sole ground of his priestly office, when he is unemployed.

“The Romish priests and monks,” he says, “are accustomed to an idle life, setting aside the laborious duty of saying mass; so that, when they leave their ancient creed from motives of conscience and clear conviction, their first inquiry is, how they are to live. Hence many are kept in allegiance to Rome, because they fear they shall die of hunger if they desert her. Others throw themselves boldly into any reform whatever, under the vain hope of finding the means to become rich. The priest who is persuaded of the truth, but not converted by it, is always in search of “what he shall eat, what he shall drink, and wherewithal he shall be clothed;” and is unhappy and desponding if he is not supplied as he thinks necessary. I shall exhort them to work as I do, and gain their own bread. St. Paul laboured with his own hands, and why should not a priest who has not much to do in his ministry, spend his leisure time in some civil or literary employment? I even indulge the hope that we may at last return to the old practice in this matter.”¹

It would have been very easy to select and expose many cases of great hardship and extreme severity, in the carrying out of the tithe and hierarchical systems among impoverished parties who are liable to the demand; and also very many instances of avarice and excessive accumulation, through pluralities and otherwise, by indolent, luxurious receivers! Many of the works to which reference has been made breathe a spirit and abound in language, strongly denouncing the system and its effects! The object of this treatise is however, not to excite feelings of irritation and animosity, but to promote a fair and dispassionate view of a great national and religious question, and to commend it, in its plain and genuine colours, to the deliberate consideration of an enlightened Christian community!

¹ Dealings with the Inquisition.

CHAPTER XXI.

ON ECCLESIASTICAL PATRONAGE, OR THE APPOINTMENT OF MINISTERS, BISHOPS, ETC.

1st Section.—Introduction.

ALTHOUGH, in the early endowment of the Church with property, the relief of the poor had been the great object in view; yet by degrees, as corruption and avarice crept in, its officers who administered the funds, and more particularly such as performed the ministerial functions, generally applied a large part to themselves. A regular allowance for the support of these, as a separate priestly caste, came to be expected; and the proportion applied to other objects was, in the course of time, greatly reduced; till at length the whole was generally absorbed by the ministers, and claimed by them as their due. The character of trustees became sunk in that of owners. The priests obtained the lion's share!

It was indeed a natural consequence of the system of tithes, and of other stated pecuniary payments, joined with the recognition of one individual minister for each congregation, that those who held them should, as they degenerated from purity and integrity, assert a property in these funds; and that the holders should be regarded as lessees for life.

But a further evil was, that on the decease of each of these, the property or endowment did not revert to the church, to be again applied to its general uses, or even to be allotted by its voice to another party, together with the ministerial office; but in most cases it passed back to a second class termed "Patrons," being private individuals or public bodies, "lay or clerical." Each of these, having obtained what was improperly termed "the right of patronage" *jus patronatus*, claimed the privilege

of appointing himself, or one of themselves if a minister, and if not, then some other minister to the vacant office.

In the primitive ages, the functions of prophesying or of the ministry were, as is evident from scripture evidence, not restricted to one individual in each congregation; and even when they became more limited, the church at large, or believers generally in each place, had a voice, according to the united testimony of ecclesiastical historians, in the appointment or approval of ministers, and of all their other officers, as a natural right.

Holy men, so eminent in the gathering of the churches, and so largely endued with the Holy Spirit, as James, Peter, Paul, Timothy and Titus, naturally exercised a considerable influence in the proceedings and judgments of the church; yet were they very careful not to act as "Lords over God's heritage," or to infringe on the privileges of the believers generally; but feeling themselves to be fellow-members, and not the heads of the several spiritual bodies, they claimed simply to be helpers and joint-heirs with their brethren, under Christ the ever-living head.¹

Archbishop Cranmer remarks, "Sometimes the apostles and others, unto whom God had given abundantly his Spirit, sent or appointed ministers of God's word; sometimes the people did choose such as they thought meet thereto. And when any were sent or appointed by the apostles or others, the people, of their own free will, with thanks did accept them. The people, before Christian princes were, did commonly elect their bishops and priests."²

The bishops however, forgetting their true relative position, began, especially about the year 500, to arrogate power to themselves, and to assume the right of approving or nominating ministers, and dispensing the goods of the church. Imitating the example of the feudal lords, they claimed to be treated as such by their own inferiors, exacting homage from both ministers and people, with pecuniary reservations and servile obedience.

¹ "And when they had ordained them elders in every church," &c.—*Acts* xiv. 23. The Greek word here translated "ordained," signifies "elected by show of hands," implying an appointment by the church, under the superintendence of Paul and his companions.

² Burnet's History, vol. i.—Records.

In proportion as the pastoral office was restricted to one individual in each religious assembly, and as pecuniary payment became attached to the performance of the service, it grew to be an object of gain and ambition, as a profitable, dignified profession. The necessity of the gifts and calling of the Holy Ghost was little considered. Ambition led to intrigues and factions in the appointments to office.¹ The people gradually lost their privileges, both spiritual and temporal; they were required to yield their judgments and to pay their money; the ministers and bishops became proportionately elevated and independent, usurping the functions and even the name of "the Church."

Instead of being men qualified for service by its Great Head, and subject to the approbation, or called by the voice, of the believers at large, they were appointed entirely by their ecclesiastical superiors, who often acted from unworthy motives in the selection, and obtruded their nominees by arbitrary measures. Ordinations or appointment of ministers, without a destination to one particular church or locality, were generally discountenanced.²

"The light of noonday is not clearer," says Paolo Sarpi, the learned writer just quoted, "than that the election of ecclesiastical officers was first in the people; that afterwards it came into the hands of the princes, when they had received the Christian faith and had taken the affairs of the church into their care; and lastly, that the appointments rested in the clergy only, after the seculars had been excluded, every diocese retaining its own right of election and collation, till the popes gradually assumed it to themselves."³ All parties became involved on this account in violent and long-continued contentions.

2nd Section.—Benefices.

The original institution of benefices is very ancient, and involved in much obscurity. All who were admitted to ecclesiastical functions for the first two hundred years appear to have been elected by the faithful in general assemblies.⁴ In

¹ Paolo Sarpi on Benefices, chap. ix.

² Ibid. chap. ii.

³ Ibid. chap. xxxv.

⁴ Ibid. chaps. iii. and vii.

Cyprian's letter to the Spanish nation about 250, he desires that "no one may be ordained but in the presence of the people." A Council at Laodicea, in 368, decreed however that the people should not, in the first place, choose the minister or priest; but one held at Carthage in 397 required the concurrence and acceptance of the flock in the appointment of pastors. A canon of the year 428 also shows that the election of ministers was in the clergy, but subject to the consent of the people. And in 493 this was extended to the appointment of bishops. The approval of the congregation was again pronounced necessary by the third Council at Orleans in 538.¹

The "apostolical constitutions," as they are termed, enacted that if any bishop, presbyter or deacon should obtain his dignity for money, the parties, both ordaining and ordained, should be deposed and cut off from communion, like Simon Magus. Several councils issued decrees to the same effect, showing that the practice of buying and selling such offices was prevalent.²

According to the sacramentary of Gregory the Great, no priest could be ordained without the publication of banns, such as are used for marriage; and the people were called on to object, if the candidate were unsuitable.

The claim of individuals to the patronage of particular churches is of great antiquity, and, though attended with evils of no small magnitude, has not been without its advocates. The most plausible ground alleged in its favour is that of especial services originally rendered, in erecting the buildings, endowing the ministers, or otherwise promoting the establishments.

It had been a common idea among the heathen nations, that the deities were propitious to a country, in proportion to the number of its temples and altars. This opinion was gradually introduced among Christians, and in consequence of it, as well as of pure religious motives, places of worship or "churches" were greatly multiplied as early as the time of Constantine. Both the ecclesiastical and the secular authorities exerted themselves to provide these edifices, in the cities as well as in the rural districts. Wealthy persons, and lords of the country or of particular manors, were encouraged to erect such buildings as acts of piety, and as the means of obtaining forgiveness of

¹ Report of Lords on Auchterarder Case.

² Bingham's Christian Antiquities.

sins. In return for the public use of them, and for the tithes derived from their lands, the owners and their representatives were allowed the privilege of proposing, and by degrees of absolutely appointing, the ministers. Those who contributed large donations to the church appear to have been encouraged and compensated by enjoying the same privilege, in cases where patrons did not already exist. Hence arose the "right of patronage," borrowed in part from an old Roman custom of patrons and clients.

Bochmer, in his "*Jus Parochiale*," a work of great authority, refers to the existence of patrons, saying "Let the decisive vote in an election be given to the patron; but a negative vote to the people, that they may dissent if they can allege just reasons."¹

A Scotch Act of 1567 alludes to "the presentation of lay patronages always reserved to the just and ancient patrons." Some of the most powerful of these had however become such by seizing the *praedial* tithes, leaving "the altarage" or smaller oblations to the ministers.² Thus the patrons made themselves impro priators in many cases.

The Emperor Justinian in the sixth century had forbidden any payment or reward to be given for obtaining sacred offices; but decreed that all founders of churches and their heirs should be allowed the privilege of nominating their own clerks thereto. This practice became general, and the nobles considered the clergy among their retainers, often exacting pensions from them out of their livings, appointing to the priestly office men who were their relatives, or whom they wished to oblige, but not possessed of proper qualifications, and even their own serfs.³ Masses were expected to be said for the release of the souls of the patrons from purgatory, and this was esteemed a consideration of no small value! Many of them after death were canonized, becoming "patron saints" of the places for worship, though with little or no pretensions to moral sanctity!

These presentations or appointments being *ex-mero beneficio*, and compensated by the *beneficence* of the people, were termed *benefices*. The right was attached to the lands of the founders, and it often passed with them from one proprietor to another; hence a reproachful species of nepotism crept in, and the indi-

¹ Report of Lords on Auchterarder Case. ² Burn's Ecclesiastical Law.

³ Bingham's Christian Antiquities.

vidual patronage, or ownership of appointments to the ministerial office, fell into the hands of a variety of persons. The congregations, who were in reality the parties chiefly concerned, were not consulted, and had no voice in the matter. A real call from the great Head of the Church was little regarded, and the most sacred functions became a species of inheritance! Every benefice had for its patron either the state, or the bishop, or some clerical or secular body or individual, either occupying it or appointing an occupier for life. On the death of the minister, if a private patron omits to exercise his right within six months, things are said to "return to their right order," and the patronage lapses to the bishop.¹

The monarch, as head of the church, is termed "patron paramount" of all the benefices in England, any of which ultimately become vested in the crown, when not properly filled, or when the holder is preferred to a bishopric. The tithes in extra-parochial places also belong to the sovereign. The English people, though so deeply interested, are restricted by law and custom from exercising any judgment in the appointment of ministers.

The appointment or *call (advocatio)* of a minister to the office, often became in process of time severed from the land; but still it entitled him to the tithes and other endowments, and being held to be a distinct property, was termed an *advowson*. The pecuniary reward or compensation was an object of greater consideration than the spiritual service for which it had been assigned. The old entreaty was often renewed, "Put me I pray thee into one of the priests' offices, that I may eat a piece of bread."²

While the claim to the patronage of many benefices originated in the manner which has been described; in others it was

¹ A Bishop in the west of England, who appears to have obtained that office through his political pamphlets, is said to be very inquisitive into the titles of patrons in his diocese, whenever livings become vacant. Several instances are stated to have occurred, in which, through his subtle objections, a delay of six months has been occasioned, when he has claimed the right of presentation as having lapsed to himself, and given the living to some relation of his own! Surely this is a species of trickery discreditable to any member, much more to any bishop, of a Christian church!—*Edinburgh Review, No. 193.*

² 1 Samuel ii. 36.

founded at first on mere possession, through the gift of the ruling powers, or the election of the people. That which had been obtained by favour, or on certain conditions, was, after the lapse of years, claimed as a right, and disposed of as other inheritances. Yet the title to the property was in many cases so doubtful, that the church not unfrequently became “litigious;” that is, it was the subject of disputes and conflicts between contending claimants. Many laws were made to prevent usurpations; and in order to put an end to litigation, the right of presentation has in some cases been arranged to be enjoyed in turn by the different claimants. The same arrangement has probably proceeded, in other cases, from the circumstance of two or more persons or families having contributed to the first erection of the fabric, or possessed most of the land in the district, or being equally heirs of the founder. All differences relating to the right of patronage were, by the constitutions of Clarendon in the twelfth century, restricted to be tried in the civil courts.

The absence of incumbents often gave rise to reports of their death, and presentations were claimed by others to fill the supposed vacancies; so that special enactments were issued against persons casting an evil eye on the benefices of others, and feigning such reports; also against patrons presenting in such cases; as well as against intruders who got possession of livings and defended themselves by force of arms! “A spoliation” was sued for in these instances. If the true patron did not within six months proceed by suit against the usurper to prevent the induction, he lost his presentation ever afterwards, till Queen Anne restored such claims by law.

The numerous abbeys and priories were occupied by ecclesiastics, most of whom officiated as ministers in the country round, and received the church revenue, or some specific part of it, from the several districts. With urgent entreaties, they often persuaded their benefactors to confer upon their houses or themselves the right of presentation, on the plea of their hospitality; and so great was their success in this and other methods, some of which were very questionable, that these institutions became by degrees the patrons of more than one-half of the “churches” or livings in England,¹ which were termed

¹ Burn's Ecclesiastical Law.

appropriations. When those religious establishments were broken up, the property and patronage of some were sold or given away to the nobility or gentry; while in other cases they were made over to the new bishops' sees, or to old ones, to the chapters, or to colleges in the universities; some again being retained by the crown. Thus the patronage became distributed among various bodies or individuals, lay, clerical, episcopal, capitular, collegiate, political and royal.

In some instances, the whole tithe was charged with ministerial functions; in others these were connected with only a part, and the remainder of the tithe became *impropriate*, or vested in one who *impropriè* or improperly received the income, not performing the duties. Hence the great or rectorial tithes of a parish are often inappropriate, or belonging to a party who performs no ministerial service, while the small or vicarial tithes alone are held by the minister; at other times the tithe rent-charge of both kinds is inappropriate, the minister being provided for by certain payments out of it, or from other sources. Custom is the great legal authority and arbiter in these matters, and varies much in different parishes and districts. With respect to inappropriate tithe rent-charge, there is of course no other patron than the *impropriator*, unless a part of the rent-charge be reserved as a provision for a minister or perpetual curate. No parish has more than one patron or body of patrons, except in succession.

Great difference of opinion prevails as to the time when the country was first divided into parishes, (*παροίκια* or *parochia*, a neighbourhood,) Camden dates it as early as 630. Hobart asserts that the division originated with the Council of Lateran in 1179; but on the other hand, some such arrangement is referred to in the laws of King Edgar, about 970. The divisions and subdivisions appear to have been introduced by degrees.

The early *parochia* was the small diocese or district of the bishop or superintendent, in which he and the ministers lived together on part of the common fund, provided by the oblations of the people for "pious uses"—caring for the poor, repairing the places of worship, and dispensing hospitality around them; himself visiting the whole district once a year, and the ministers going out to preach, and encouraging the erection of oratories or

small chapels in remote parts, where the population was zealous or numerous.¹ The boundaries of parishes are still governed by ancient custom, and are very arbitrary.

In 1215, it was enacted by a Lateran Council that every man should pay his tithes to the minister of his own parish; instead of being at liberty to bestow them on any minister or religious house, as he pleased, and as had frequently been done.

The patronage of livings, or appointments to the ministry, having thus been wrested from the people or congregations, to whom, under the Great Head of the church, the judgment of qualification naturally and properly belonged, became the object of frequent ambition and contention among different claimants. The number and authority of ecclesiastical councils, which had maintained some appearance of popular control, diminished, and the judgment of even matters of faith and discipline was usurped by the higher powers. So great was the departure from the simplicity and purity of the apostolic Christian pattern, that the system of the church and state ministry, and especially that part which forms the subject of the present chapter, bore little or no resemblance to it, and had become a complex, corrupt, secular hierarchy. The Popes and the potentates of Europe quarrelled about their respective shares of the spoil; each party, on presenting to a benefice, expecting a valuable consideration in the shape of first-fruits or tenths, or under some other name; notwithstanding many enactments against the sale of orders, and also of benefices. "They who buy or sell holy orders can be no priests," said Gregory of the sixth century, reputed for a saint, "wherefore they incur *anathema dandi et anathema accipiendi*, and are counted guilty of simoniacal heresy."

The Popes, in the period of their most uncontrolled usurpation, put forth extravagant pretensions under specious reasons to the right of universal patronage or investiture, and got by degrees a large portion into their own hands; taking advantage of times of civil confusion still further to usurp the power, for their own personal aggrandizement and gain. Even companies of merchants openly bought the benefices of whole districts from the papal agents, and retailed them at advanced prices to the highest bidders: in fact, the practice of selling benefices was so notorious

¹ Burn's Ecclesiastical Law.—Appropriations.

that no pains were taken to deny or disguise it!¹ These usurpations and scandalous proceedings were practised both in England and in other countries.

Bernard, usually styled a saint, writing to Pope Eugenius III. about 1150, laments that Rome was the common rendezvous of the ambitious, the covetous, the simoniacal, the sacrilegious, the adulterer and the incestuous; who resorted thither in pursuit of benefices, and met with a reception which they could obtain nowhere else!² Beneficiary bulls, given to such characters, generally began with the apologizing words, “*De plenitudine potestatis,*” or “*Non obstantibus.*” Expectative grants or provisors, in anticipation of vacancies, were also issued, commencing with “*Si pro alio ibidem non scripsimus.*”³ Innocent IV. is described by writers both ancient and modern, as “*a roaring lion,*” whose chief endeavour was to devour all the benefices that came within his reach!⁴ To promote disputes and appeals to Rome was a frequent artifice of the papal see, in order to obtain authority and money!

“A detestable distinction to favour certain rich officials,” was introduced in the twelfth century, between benefices of residence and those of non-residence; the pope, for secret considerations, frequently giving the minister leave to appoint a vicar or deputy, to receive the small or vicarial tithes, or some other parts of the income, and to perform the service; while the minister himself retained the greater tithes or chief of the revenue, without duty. It appears from Matthew Paris that vicarages gained a place in England, under Alexander III., about 1170. Another assumption soon followed that of non-residence—an individual might hold more than one living, especially when these were small; and the same liberty was gradually extended to benefices of both kinds and of all amounts, on a variety of specious pretences. Thus were introduced pluralities, *commendams*, peculiars, impropriations, provisors, exemptions, dispensations, &c., which, though less frequent now than formerly, are far from being wholly abolished to the present day.

In 1298, Boniface VIII. boldly maintained in the Decretals, that the absolute disposition of all benefices belonged to the pope,—a maxim which had already been inculcated and acted

¹ Robertson's Charles V. ² P. Sarpi on Benefices, chap. xxx. ³ Ibid.

⁴ Lockman's Preface to Paolo Sarpi.

on ; but the source of ecclesiastical oppression and endless contentions.¹

The Council of Rheims under Calixtus II. about 1300, enacted, among other things, that no man should buy or sell any ecclesiastical office or promotion ; that no lay person should invest with clerical orders ; and that no bishop or priest should devise a benefice, by way of inheritance.²

For several centuries the monstrous pretensions of the papal see were maintained with a high hand, in the disposal of benefices and livings. The pope claimed the nomination to such benefices, as fell vacant during six or eight months of each year. These were called the pope's months ! There were besides reservations of all livings, possessed by ministers who were appointed cardinals or bishops, by those translated to other benefices, and by such as died at Rome or within forty miles of it. Pensions out of livings were bargained for, infringing on the vested rights of patrons ; and every artifice was adopted to increase the papal revenues and influence ! The avarice of the clerical order knew no bounds. Benefice after benefice was heaped on the same person, in defiance of all laws !

The statutes of premunire were passed in England, under Edward I., in the fourteenth century, to guard against this foreign interference ; and his firmness was exerted to check the rapacity of the see of Rome. All these its contrivances were evidently simoniacial, contrary to the rights of the English and other churches, and designed to extract as much money as possible for the appointment to livings. Since such more open attempts have been put to shame, the covert plea of onerous perquisites and official fees, advanced by ecclesiastical authorities with the same object, has not been wanting even in protestant countries !

The Council of Trent, which was called in 1547 with a professed design to reform ecclesiastical abuses, and which continued to sit at intervals for sixteen years, is said by its learned historian, Paolo Sarpi, to have been designed chiefly to remedy three things—plurality of benefices, hereditary succession, and non-residence. It decreed that no ecclesiastic should have more than one benefice with cure of souls ; but allowed another to be held *in commendam* or without duty. It prohibited the

¹ P. Sarpi, chap. xxxv.

² Dupin's Ecclesiast. Hist.

succession of relatives to any benefice without regular ordination;—a prohibition which proved of no effect. On the question of residence the members fell into acrimonious disputes; some contending for it by the divine law, and others maintaining that it was enjoined merely by canon law, with which the court of Rome might dispense. The reservations, or the privilege of the Pope to bestow benefices, they left untouched. The general results of the council, in these and other matters, disappointed the best friends of the church.¹

Many of the early reformers struggled hard to obtain authority for the congregations to choose their own spiritual officers, or to secure to them at least the power of expressing approval or disapproval. But the secular rulers generally decided against such claims, and enforced the privileges of the patrons and other authorities, which had then long been exercised.

John Knox says, in his first book of discipline, 1560, “It pertaineth to the people—to every congregation, to elect their minister.” And in his second book, 1578, he remarks, “The liberty of election of persons called to ecclesiastical functions, observed without interruption so long as the kirk was not corrupted by antichrist, we desire to be restored; so that no man be intruded upon any congregation, either by the prince or by any inferior person, without lawful election, and the assent of the people over whom the parson is placed; as the practice of the apostolic and primitive kirk, and good order craves.”²

In the time of Edward VI., the patrons, in a large proportion of the parishes, had given the benefices to their menials as wages—to the gardeners, and the keepers of their hawks or hounds; or else they let out the glebe and parsonage, the vicar obtaining a chamber at an alehouse, amid the bad company which frequented it!³ The king, or others in his name, took from the bishops manors of land and livings without hesitation, and bestowed them on court favourites! Cranmer, Ridley and others were subjected to this spoliation.⁴ Supposing the endowments to have been excessive or altogether objectionable, as they doubtless

¹ Paolo's History of the Council of Trent.

² Judgment of Lords on Auchterarder Case, 1839.

³ Lives of British Reformers.

⁴ Oliver's History of Exeter.

were, this arbitrary course was a strange mode of setting matters right!

Queen Elizabeth enacted that, if any patron accepted money for the presentation of a benefice, such presentation should be void, and the queen or her successors should for that time present. Other statutes have followed to the same purport.

In 1584, the House of Commons submitted to the Lords, "That no bishop should ordain a minister without the concurrence of six presbyters; that no minister should be appointed, without previous opportunity for the parishioners to inquire into the soundness of his doctrine, the integrity of his life," &c. But these propositions were rejected.¹ At the Reformation, and at the subsequent changes, when the ministers of one profession were displaced, and those of another were put into the pulpits, "the rights of patronage" were totally disregarded, the secular heads of the national churches taking the power into their own hands, and disposing of the livings as they saw fit. The claim was not abolished however, but was revived in full force by the old or new patrons, as the religious troubles subsided; being always held subject, in some degree, to the will of the ruling sovereigns. Cromwell appointed "Triers" to examine the ministers, and those whom they deemed unsuitable were ejected. He also appointed a commission in 1654, to inquire into the value of all benefices, to ascertain the patrons, and if needful to unite two or more parishes together, in which case the patrons were to present by turns. No minister to receive less than £100 per year.²

In Scotland, more than in most other countries, the congregations have repeatedly resisted the intrusion of disapproved ministers, through the nomination of worldly-minded patrons; claiming for the members of the church the right of objecting, or pronouncing a veto. In England, where the state church maintains no definite membership, the subject has engaged but little attention; there is no specific body to pronounce a veto, and the people quietly acquiesce in this time-sanctioned invasion of their spiritual rights. Yet it seems scarcely credible that appointments, so important to the interests of the church at large, should have been suffered thus to dwindle down into private property, and to be transferred from hand to hand as such.

¹ Fuller's Ecclesiastical History.

² Neal's Puritans.

In neither country has the authority of Christ been properly recognized, "to send by whom he will send," whether by one or by several, as it may please *him*. A single individual in each parish, claiming the ecclesiastical income, has been styled in England, from early popish times, the *parson*, or *persona ecclesiae*, as representing in himself the local church, possessing its revenues, and being its *rector* or ruler. Behind him, the patron who presented him, and who is ready to present another at the next vacancy, is very much lost sight of. On an average of five years, there were reported by the Committee on First-fruits, in 1837, to be 518 institutions to livings annually. Sinecure benefices without congregations sometimes happen, especially in Ireland. There are in England upwards of sixty sinecure rectories.¹

By degrees, the patronage of benefices in England and Wales has become widely distributed; so that at present, of about 11,000 livings within the establishment, the pastors of 952 are chosen by the crown; 1258 by archbishops and bishops; 787 by deans and chapters; 1851 by other dignitaries; 721 by universities and colleges; 53 by municipal corporations; and 5096 by private persons.² Total 10,718. Thus more than half of all the parochial benefices in England are at the disposal of individuals; the church having no guarantee whether they are secular or ecclesiastical, residing near at hand or at a distance, concerned or utterly indifferent as to the right qualification of the party whom they present. It is however freely admitted, that many patrons endeavour to discharge the trust conscientiously; while numerous instances exist to the contrary. In parishes where the great tithes were appropriated to a religious house or person, that house or person was usually patron of the vicarage; and in subsequent transfers the two claims have frequently gone together. The consent of the patron was required to each tithe commutation. In Scotland, the right of patronage in 587 parishes is held by the various landholders, in 302 by the crown; in 60 by the privy council; and in 23 by colleges or individuals.

The patronage of livings is still sometimes transferred, with consent of the ordinary or bishop, to large benefactors. It is frequently divided between different persons, and between

¹ Burn's Ecclesiastical Law.—Simony.

² McCulloch's Statistics.—Commissioners' Report, 1835.

persons of different classes ; each presenting in turn. When a patron wishes to sell a vacant living, he usually gives it to an aged minister, and then sells the reversionary interest, or in other words, the next presentation. Occasionally, the party presented is unable from age or infirmity to fulfil the duties, yet strange to say, the law does not annul the appointment on that account ! The claim of patronage is held to be paramount to such considerations!

Advowsons are sometimes claimed and held by Jews, and by others who are adverse to the doctrines of the established church ; but catholics are prohibited from exercising the right. Livings pass under wills and marriage settlements as freeholds, are mortgaged for sums of money, and may be sequestrated for their smallness, for debt, for neglect, or for dilapidations. They are advertised for sale, like other property, in the newspapers ; and are often specially recommended to purchasers, because the present incumbent is aged, and there is a prospect of early possession ; or because the population is small and the duty light ; or because the district is favourable for sporting ; or on account of some other inducement of ease, profit or pleasure ! What resemblance is there between such a picture of actual circumstances in this section of the professing Christian church, and the holy and disinterested pattern of the apostles of Christ ; who sought “ no man’s silver or gold,” but cheerfully sacrificed their own will and pleasure, in the discharge of spiritual services ?

Dr. Paley remarks,¹ that the sale of advowsons is inseparable from the allowance of private patronage ; as patronage would otherwise devolve to the most indigent, and for that reason the most improper hands it could be placed in.² Thus the system becomes widely corrupted, and one evil leads to another. He thinks that the law intended not to prohibit the passing of advowsons from one patron to another, but to restrain the patron from presenting for a bribe, or for personal benefit. Is not this however really the case when an advowson is sold, and especially to a minister, who, on the living becoming void, inducts himself ? Ecclesiastical patronage is compared to a freehold of forty shillings annual value, which gives a right to vote for a representative in parliament ; the vote or nomination in either case not being allowed to be influenced by money. This com-

¹ Moral and Political Economy, iii. 1—20.

² Ibid.

parison is very defective ; and greatly are the ministerial duty and appointment degraded by it, and by such a proprietorship !

When a patron presents a minister to be settled as the pastor of a church, the congregation have no voice in the matter ; and unless he be legally disqualified, which is not easily proved, the bishop is bound to admit him, on his subscribing his acknowledgment of the royal supremacy, his approval of the liturgy, and his assent to the thirty-nine articles. In donative livings however, the patron collates or imposes the minister without reference to the bishop. Indeed, so absolute and uncontrollable is the power of patrons in the eye of the law, that William Gladstone, a distinguished member of the present British government, stated last year in the House of Commons, that for a minister “to represent the Bible as a fiction and an absurdity,” is no offence which any ecclesiastical court would deem a sufficient ground, for interference with the right of the patron or with the presentee in taking possession. What Christian principle can be alleged for such a system ?

Thus many enter this holy office through the exercise of such a “right” who are in many respects unprepared, and even in the judgment of the church at large, wholly unfit to perform the duties of a minister of the gospel, presuming upon their independence of the people, and even making a boast of it ! It is true that patrons can present none but those who have been ordained as priests ; yet this often proves in practice to be a very insufficient security. As some check on the present evils, it has been suggested that the congregation should nominate three, of whom one should be selected by the patron, or *vice versā*. Such a mode, it is evident, would soon destroy the pecuniary value of the appointment. Surely this is much to be desired, and the claim of patronage, which has no shadow of a foundation in the New Testament, ought to be wholly abolished !

Bishop Latimer complained that in his day, many benefices were let out to farm by secular men, or given to their servants as a consideration for keeping their hounds, hawks and horses ; and that the poor clergy were reduced to such short allowance, that they were forced to go to service, turn clerks of the kitchen, surveyors, receivers, &c.¹

In an address to the Regent in 1552, he boldly says, “The
¹ Neal's Puritans.

land is full of idle pastors ; and how can it be otherwise, when the nobility and patrons of livings put in just those, who they know will allow them to take out most profit ? It would be good if your grace would send out surveyors to see how benefices are bestowed. Benefices are everywhere robbed and plundered by patrons ! And now, if we search for the root of all these evils, what is it but avarice ?”

A worldly-minded patron may obtrude an equally worldly-minded minister, and in every such case the congregation are spoiled both spiritually and temporally, without the means of redress in all probability as long as he lives. A dissolution of the union with the state would release the protestant episcopal church from this thraldom of patronage. But the coveted temporalities unhappily stand in the way of such a change ; and for the sake of these, she continues to submit to the present bondage !¹

Bishop Burnet, one of the upholders of the system, thus candidly describes some of its effects : “ Patronage is a noble thing in a family, and has always been highly esteemed. But many receive into the service of the church unworthy men, who are in the sequel reproaches to it, and this is often the case with the richest benefices. Some sell the next advowson, which is said to be legal, even though the incumbent is at the point of death ; others do not stick to buy and sell benefices when open and vacant, though this is declared by law to be simony. Parents buy them for their children. In such cases it is true there is no perjury ; for the person presented is no party to the bargain. Often ecclesiastics themselves buy the next advowson, and lodge it with trustees for their own advantage. Where nothing of all this traffic intervenes, patrons bestow benefices on their children or friends, without considering their abilities or merit. How great a part of the benefices of England are disposed of, if not simoniacally, yet at least unworthily, without regard to so sacred a trust as the care of souls ! Patrons ought to act with great caution and in the fear of God ; and not to enter into that filthy merchandise of the souls of men, which is too common !”²

When Burnet himself had been presented with a benefice, he declined to take it absolutely, till he had performed the functions

¹ D'Aubigné's Germany, England and Scotland.

² Conclusion to History of his Own Times.

for four months, and received a joint request from all the parishioners. He was then "*ordained*" in 1665. He remarks that exemptions are a scandalous remnant of popery, and that they take a great part of the diocese out of the hands of the bishops.¹

The sale of a *vacant* benefice or living by the patron, is pronounced by the canons of the Anglican church to be "simony," a "detestable sin," and "execrable before God;" yet to sell the *reversion* or the next presentation, though it may be in actual possession to-morrow, is esteemed no simony, no sin or offence at all! By such technical quibbles and frivolous distinctions, resting on no discernible moral ground, is one of the highest callings under the gospel deliberately trampled upon; and the holy office of the ministry is reduced to an article of pecuniary value; being made a matter of appointment by one man—the patron or reputed owner, who is independent of the judgment of the church at large. Hundreds of livings are thus bought and sold annually by patrons; the highest prices being obtained for those where the population is small and the income largest. Surely it is quite time to put a stop to this trafficking in duties so sacred!

One of the first acts of an English minister, on his accession to a living, is to make a rigid inspection of the dilapidations of all the ecclesiastical buildings, and especially of the parsonage house; the amount requisite for full repairs is then demanded of the representatives of the former incumbent, who are often called upon for large amounts, and dispossessed in a summary manner.

In some English parishes or episcopal congregations, where the people exercise the power of electing their own ministers, there being no church discipline to determine the question of membership, every person paying "church-rates" has been allowed to vote. Thus many dissenters obtain the responsibility of doing so. Indecorous contests have ensued; party feelings and influences taking the place of those sacred motives, which ought ever to operate in such matters. Were there no pecuniary emolument or endowment, it might be reasonably hoped that a sense of spiritual qualifications in the individual, and of duty to the church, would animate the ministers and people, and impel them to a common and pure desire to act disinterestedly, as in the sight of God, and for the good of his cause.

¹ Conclusion to History of his Own Times.

Although as has been remarked, attempts have been made at different times to introduce the election of ministers by the congregations, and thus to destroy the right of patronage, yet they have proved ineffectual. The demands of property and "vested interests," though relating to those sacred functions in which property ought never to be recognized, have hitherto proved too strong in the Anglican church for the spiritual claims of the people; and individuals continue to usurp the functions of the body at large, and of Christ, the head of his own church!

Lecturers are often appointed in London and other cities, as assistants to the rectors, being chosen, according to ancient usage, by the vestry or chief inhabitants, their usual office being to preach in the afternoons. There are also one or more lecturers in most cathedrals, and many lectureships have been founded by the donations of private persons. The bishop is considered to have a right to judge of the qualifications of any one appointed a lecturer, and may refuse to grant his license unless funds are provided for a fixed salary, and unless the party subscribes to the thirty-nine articles, &c., like other ministers.¹ There are said to be about 350 lectureships in England and Wales, supported by endowments and otherwise.

3rd Section.—On Bishoprics.

The bishops, known also as presbyters, elders or overseers, were anciently chosen by the general voice of the ministers and people; so that no such ruler or superintendent was obtruded on them without their approbation. The same mode was adopted in episcopal elections, as in those of ministers and other officers. The practice differed however in different churches. Frequent and violent disputes arose after the general declension, between the several parties claiming the right of election. No less than 300 persons are said to have been killed on one of these occasions; and, on the insufficient plea of such disorders, the princes often precluded the people from the exercise of their ancient right.²

Sylvester I. in 330 enacted, that the whole body of believers should possess the elective franchise for the bishopric of Rome. Ambrose, civil governor of Milan, is well known to have been raised to archiepiscopal dignity by the general voice of the people;

¹ Burn's Ecclesiastical Law.

² Ibid.

and his great cotemporary Augustin was called to the priestly and episcopal functions in the same manner in 395.

The authority of the Bishop of Rome in the appointment of other bishops is rarely met with during the first four centuries. At a later period no ordination, even of a bishop, was held to be valid without the sanction of the people. After this regulation had been invaded, Charlemagne restored to the cities the right of electing their own bishops, and to the monks of appointing their abbots, as well as to the congregations the choice of their ministers; while the bishops and people jointly nominated the pope for the approval of the emperor. The posterity of Charlemagne however soon degenerated, and the bishops were enabled to advance their own pretensions.¹

By the laws of Justinian about 540 already referred to, the people were cut off from taking any part in episcopal investitures, the power being confined to the ecclesiastics, and to persons of the highest rank. A good lawyer or statesman was said to make a better bishop than a good divine, and this idea appears still to prevail in certain quarters!

On the breaking up of the Roman empire, the Gothic kings in France and Spain were admitted to a share in the appointment of bishops, and their approbation was held to be requisite. From this beginning the power of princes quickly increased to the prerogative of the sole appointment. The new bishop swore fealty and did homage to the lord, who invested him by the delivery of a ring, and of a crosier or pastoral staff.

The Council of Bari in 1096, according to the gross notions then prevailing, declared it to be abominable that pure hands, which could "create God, and offer him up in sacrifice for the sins of the world," should (in the act of homage for a benefice or bishopric) be placed between hands polluted with bloodshed, or defiled by contact with the other sex!²

The bishops in early times were allowed a fourth part of the revenues of each church for themselves, but special provisions of large amount were soon made for them without having recourse to the common fund. They became the associates of princes, and sometimes equalled them in wealth and expenditure. Many of the abbots were mitred, and ranked as prelates.

Gregory VII. or Hildebrand, who first claimed for himself

¹ Paolo Sarpi, chap. xv.

² Keightley's History of England.

alone the common name of pope, or *papa*, excommunicated the emperor Henry IV. no less than four times, for conferring or selling bishoprics, and for other offences; and in 1075, with hands which were by no means clear of the same, he issued a fulminating decree against the practice, and forbade, on pain of excommunication, the conferring of spiritual dignities by any lay persons, having special reference to kings and princes. The contest was long continued between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, and no bishop was allowed to exercise the functions after his appointment, till he had been confirmed by the pope. The wars produced by this vexed question lasted for fifty-six years, during the time of six popes; and are said to have caused seventy-eight battles and *the destruction of millions of people*, till Henry V. resigned the claim to the investitures in 1122.¹ The custom in Europe subsequently was,² for the ruler of the state to nominate the individual, and to invest him with the temporal power and perquisites by the delivery of a wand or sceptre; and for the pope to consecrate him (as it was termed), or invest him with the spiritual authority of bishop, by presenting him with the ring and crosier, as emblems of his nuptials with the church and of his pastoral office.

About the twelfth century the papal and imperial parties became denominated Guelphs and Ghibellines, and the contests between them were fierce and protracted, especially in Florence and other parts of Italy. In succeeding times the name of Guelphs was usually applied to those who espoused the cause of the people, while that of Ghibellines was synonymous with aristocrats. Ecclesiastical feuds led to these and other political conflicts, both the popes and the emperors being manifestly influenced by selfish objects. At length to quiet disputes, and to put an end to the wars which ensued, recourse was had to the base and unchristian transactions called "concordats," or bargains between the bishops of Rome and the sovereigns, for a division of the ill-gotten spoils—being the transfer of so much spiritual patronage for so much pecuniary value or secular authority! Thus the independence of European churches, which had long been torn from them, was bartered from hand to hand for worldly considerations!³ "The pope, who is a spiritual power," says Mezeray, "took to himself the temporal power—the profits; and parted

¹ P. Sarpi on Benefices, chap. xxiii. ² Mosheim. ³ Gavazzi.

with the spiritual—the nomination of bishops, to a temporal prince.”¹ The former order of things professedly spiritual was reversed for gold.

In France, the churches zealously asserted the ancient privilege of electing their own ministers and bishops, and this “right of investiture” was the subject of frequent contests between the popes, the kings and the people. The first two parties were not slow to usurp the natural claims of the church at large; and strengthened each other in such usurpation. The kings had the sole collation of all the bishoprics in the kingdom. Louis IX., or “St. Louis,” asserted the independence of the Gallican church, by publishing the “Pragmatic Sanction” in 1255. By a similar resolution or agreement of the nation, solemnly adopted by Charles VII. with his prelates and nobles in 1438, among other measures the pope was deprived of the power of appointing to vacant sees and large benefices, in conformity with the decrees of the Council of Basil, held in 1431; and the ancient right of election was restored to the people. This to some extent they continued to enjoy for thirty years, till Louis XI. was induced to enter into a treaty or concordat with Pius II., annulling the former agreement, and restoring to him the annates, or first-fruits of all benefices, which had been abolished by that Council. For this consideration, the pope formally transferred to Louis the right of investiture, and also bestowed on him and his successors the title of “Most Christian!” The university of Paris however, being seconded by public opinion, successfully vindicated the popular claims against both the pope and the king.²

The wholesale disposal of advowsons and investitures continued to be exhibited on the very eve of the Reformation, when Leo X. prevailed on Francis I. to agree to another concordat in 1516, confirming the articles of the former compact; thus the people were excluded from any share in the matter, and the power was assigned to Francis of presenting to all the French bishoprics, with many reservations in favour of the pope. The parliament made a violent opposition; but the measure was at length enforced upon an unwilling and indignant people, who conceived their spiritual rights to be set at naught.³

A concordat made in 1801, between Napoleon Buonaparte

¹ P. Sarpi, chap. xlviii.

² Mosheim.

³ Ibid. and Gavazzi.

when First Consul and Pius VII., re-established the Catholic church in France, which the revolution had overthrown, securing to the pope the canonical investiture of the bishops, and the perquisites connected with it: but the primary nomination was vested in the ruler of the state, and the number of prelates was much reduced. In 1817, Louis XVIII. concluded a new concordat with the same pope, by which the agreement made in 1516, and very injurious to the liberties of the Gallican church, was revived, and forty-two additional sees were created. This measure excited so much disgust, that the government was obliged to abandon it!¹

In Germany, the same questions have led to frequent contests for the spoil, between the popes and the emperors. In a Diet held at Worms 1122, it was agreed that the bishops and abbots should in future be chosen by those to whom the right of election belonged; but in the presence of the emperor's deputy—that the emperor should not confer the regalia by the ring and crozier, these being ensigns of "ghostly dignity;" but by the sceptre, the emblem of secular power. By a concordat between Alexander III. and Frederic I., the pope, in exchange for the aid of the state, coolly made over to the emperor the reputed rights of every diocesan chapter in Germany.² In a similar compact of Nicholas V. and Frederic III. in 1448, reservations of benefices to a large extent were made in favour of the papal see, and the right of investiture was shared between the parties as a measure of peace.

The Emperor Charles V. struck a bargain with Adrian VI., who had been his tutor, and received, for a certain consideration, the full investiture of the Spanish episcopate! Clement VII., whom Charles had taken prisoner, obtained his liberty at the price of twenty-seven bishoprics in the kingdom of Naples! What name ought to be applied to mercenary transactions such as these?

In Prussia, the veto of the state on unsuitable episcopal and clerical appointments by the pope is not yet finally settled, though various concordats have been concluded on this and other points of difference.³

¹ Buck's Theological Dictionary.

² Gavazzi's Lectures.

³ One of these related to the children of mixed marriages between Catholics and Protestants; the court of Rome insisting that all such children should be brought up in the Catholic faith, on pain of the withholding

Disputes about the authority of investiture repeatedly caused great troubles in England, where the law gave to the king the custody of the temporalities on the death of any archbishop or bishop, and the pope claimed the right of consecration. The ancient kings, and especially William Rufus, often kept the sees vacant in order to enjoy the profits, committing great waste on the forests and other episcopal property, and then selling the sees to the best bidders. Gregory VII. was the first pope who objected to the royal disposal of bishoprics and abbeys, and asserted the right for himself. In 1102, Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, acting under the papal authority, refused to consecrate bishops named by King Henry I.; and the contest lasted for many years, both parties refusing to yield. At the death of the king, civil war ensuing, the nation was involved in other difficulties, and the ecclesiastics were enabled to do as they pleased. Henry had been fully equal to the pope in selfishness. For five years he had held the primacy in his own hands, and enjoyed the profits, selling the bishoprics as they became vacant for large sums; other sovereigns did the same, and corruption spread throughout, infecting the civil and ecclesiastical bodies. It was not uncommon, with or without cause, to seize the temporalities during the life of a bishop, till Edward III. endeavoured to guard against the practice,¹ but to a great extent in vain. The popes acted on the same corrupt principle. Peckham, Archbishop of Canterbury, obtained that appointment in 1278, by engaging to pay for it to the pope 4000 marks; an engagement which was rigidly enforced.²

It was on this question, in reference to the see of Canterbury, that the quarrel between Innocent III. and King John rose to an extreme height: the pope then seemed to be all-powerful in such matters; and he had to deal with a weak-minded prince. In 1253, Innocent IV. ordered Robert, Bishop of Lincoln, to confer a benefice on a Genoese, contrary to the canons; the prelate refusing, a violent rupture followed, and succeeding prelates in many cases acted on his example, thus incurring the high displeasure of the court of Rome. Many other similar transactions might be referred to.

of spiritual privileges from the parent. The people of the nineteenth century, it may be hoped, will not long submit to such unnatural dictation!

¹ Blackstone's *Commentaries*, i. 8—1.

² Dupin's *Eccles. Hist.*

Henry VIII. assumed to himself and his successors the sole authority of investiture in England, and by an act passed in the twenty-fifth year of his reign, it was decreed that thenceforward no person should be presented or nominated to the pope, for the office of archbishop or bishop. Queen Elizabeth kept several sees vacant for some years, for the sake of the profits, which she applied to her own purposes.¹

Some remnant of an appeal to the consent of the church at large, is still found in the election of an English bishop; all opposers and objectors being publicly summoned to state their reasons for dissent from the appointment. It appears to be a matter of mere form. The fees on investiture are stated to amount to about £600.²

The popes themselves, as well as the lower ecclesiastical officers, were appointed in early times by the general suffrage of religious assemblies; Nicholas II., at a council held in 1059, first procured a decree, by which the election of the pope became vested chiefly in the cardinals—a mode which his successor, the despotic Innocent III., confirmed. Some appearance of an appeal to the people was still for a time retained. But the choice was soon entirely wrested from both them and the princes, and the cardinals became a close corporation. The word cardinal, according to Paolo Sarpi, implied at first an inferior priest or bishop. One who was appointed to a benefice was termed *Ordinatus*, but one not so provided for was termed *Incoordinatus*. About the year 600, many Italian bishops and ministers were driven from their cures by the Lombards, and being gradually replaced in other churches, were called *Episcopi* or *Presbyteri coordinales* or *cardinales*. Afterwards they assumed great authority, and gave another meaning to the word, “*quasi cardines omnium terrarum*,” claiming to be the *pivots* on which the world turned, and to be invested with exalted dignity!

By degrees Rome has succeeded in securing the almost exclusive appointment of the catholic bishops in Asia, Africa and America. How long this authority will be permitted to survive, especially in the United States, is very doubtful. In Europe, more than elsewhere, it has had to encounter resistance from sovereigns who claim a share in the usurpation.

During the long period of darkness both parties appeared to

¹ Neal's Puritans.

² Burn's Ecclesiastical Law.

be asleep on this great question, as on many others, till about the twelfth century, when, gradually awaking from their torpor, they fell into violent contentions and wars respecting it. The struggle for authority continued for several hundred years, till the time of the Reformation, and has in most catholic countries survived it. In the protestant states the claim was generally assumed by the civil rulers.

Thus the great body of Christians have been swindled out of that which they esteemed to be their birthright, and the episcopacy has become a species of political patronage—the property and tool of secular princes, or scarcely less secular ecclesiastics! Such is the melancholy tale, and such the baneful result, of political and priestly usurpation, in the union of church and state. The diffusion of spiritual gifts, the necessity of a divine call, the disinterestedness of Christian motives, the gratuitous nature of the gospel ministry, and the lively sense of religious duty,—all these have been greatly overlooked and trampled on, and opposite, unevangelical motives, influences and qualifications have to a large and lamentable extent usurped their places!

CHAPTER XXII.

PAROCHIAL RATES AND MINOR CHARGES FOR ECCLESIASTICAL SERVICES.

EVEN when the profession of christianity had become much corrupted, the revenues derived from offerings, from lands and from other free sources, as well as from tithes, constituted for a considerable period, as has already been remarked, a sufficient provision for the whole expenditure of the churches; but by degrees, as the spirit of avarice and encroachment prevailed, the ministers absorbed the entire revenues, and fresh levies were made for other ecclesiastical purposes. Some of these, in their modern forms, will now be considered.

1st Section.—“Church Rates.”

This claim is well known as the parochial levy to provide for the incidental expenses of public worship in the Anglican state church, and for the maintenance of the edifices in which it is conducted.¹

It is no charge on the owner or his property, and can be recovered only from the occupier or his goods. If the property be unoccupied, no such rate is payable. This was also the case with tithes; but the tithe rent-charge, on the contrary, is recoverable from the owner, or from his property, whether the land is occupied or not. -

¹ By a figure of speech, the *house* where the church or congregation met came to be called a church; and by another figure, or rather by a great perversion of language, the term is limited in Britain to such edifices as are used by Episcopal Protestants, as though their claims to be considered the Church of Christ were stronger than those of every other denomination. But in truth, either all houses used for divine worship are churches, or none are churches; and all the funds are church funds, or none are such.

"Church-rates" must be considered as parochial claims for the ecclesiastical uses of a portion of the community; but unfairly imposed on the other portions also, who disapprove of some of those uses, and regard them as superstitions. They are for repairing and supporting certain buildings for divine worship, and for making them and the burial-grounds holy, as is professed, by the bishop's consecration; for buying and maintaining bells, bell-ropes, organs, and other instruments of music, nowhere enjoined by the gospel, as requisite to Christian worship; for providing the various utensils, furniture, and matters employed in questionable religious ceremonies; for purchasing books to pray by, a practice not sanctioned by the New Testament; for procuring ministers' surplices, and other vestments, on Roman Catholic models, the superstitious use of which has caused for centuries extraordinary contentions; for the dinners of ministers and churchwardens at visitations; for ringing and singing feasts and other entertainments, too often ending in excess, and not authorized by primitive example; for salaries of clerks, beadle^s and other officers; also for fees to registrars, apparitors, and various attendants on an ecclesiastical jurisdiction, such as the doctrine of the gospel gives no authority to exercise.

When the application of a fourth part of the tithes for some of these purposes was discontinued, and the whole was claimed as the property of the ministers, they were long considered bound to repair some part of the buildings, and to make provision for matters already specified.

The rate was always deemed optional with the people, and not to be levied unless with the sanction of a majority of the parishioners assembled in vestry. Of late years, attempts have been made to set aside this ancient principle, and to establish the rate as being undeniable, and in the power of even a minority to impose! The question is not yet decided by the judicial authorities. The fact appears to be, that some of the amendments moved at vestries against the rate have been irregular, and the motion in favour of it, being the only regular one, has been of necessity carried.

The especial grievance of this odious burden consists, as already observed, in its being laid on the whole community for the express religious uses of one section only. At the time of the

Protectorate, the pulpits were often used by ministers of different sects; the grievance of the charge was therefore less. Now however, on the high notions fostered by a national establishment, but opposed to Christian lowliness, such a liberty would be esteemed by most Episcopalian authorities a great desecration of the place. There can be no doubt that both the houses and the burial-grounds are public property, and belong to the state, which has repeatedly handed them over, with the tithes, first to one party, and then to another, at the pleasure of the ruling power. The jealous restriction of the use of the parochial burial-grounds, except with submission to the established ministry and ritual, is therefore an evident violation of common equity, however the law may sanction it.

The amount of church-rates is supposed to have been pretty well ascertained. A return made to the House of Commons in 1846, shows them to have produced £506,812. for the year 1838-9. Lord Althorp, in 1834, had estimated them at £600,000. a year, when he proposed that they should be abolished, and that the sum of £250,000. a year should be paid out of the Consolidated Fund or revenue of the state, for the maintenance of the fabrics. To this however objections were raised by many dissenters, as unfair in principle, and by the episcopalians, as a surrender of their ancient privilege. Proposals have been more recently made to pay the amount out of the first-fruits, which are ecclesiastical funds.

In Ireland, the power to levy "Church-cess" for similar purposes, was annulled in 1833, as before remarked, and the amount has since been raised by a tax on benefices, &c.

Had the question of these rates been the only one at issue, it would probably have been settled long ago by their abolition; but the same principle was felt to be involved in the claim for tithes, and hence the reluctance to yield even a trifle, which was thought to be like admitting the thin end of a wedge. Thus Arnold remarks, "If churches are to be maintained by those only who belong to one denomination, it strikes of course at the root of any establishment; because the same principle must apply equally to tithes."¹

On the motion of J. S. Trelawney M.P., a committee was appointed by the House of Commons in 1851, to inquire into

¹ Letter 146.

the subject of church-rates. By the evidence then collected, many startling cases of great suffering were elicited, two of which are briefly as follows.

In West Hackney near London, a rate having been made on the inhabitants in 1840, to carry on the public religious services ; a dissenter named Nunn, a poor but pious man, was summoned for non-payment of 3s. 4d. demanded, and on his stating that he believed the church-rate to be illegal, he was cited to the Ecclesiastical Court, where in the cause of Varty and Mopsey *v.* Nunn, costs were accumulated to the fearful amount of £240. Dr. Lushington the judge, in giving a legal decision on the case, declared himself greatly embarrassed by the conflicting language of the various statutes. Finally however he delivered judgment against Nunn, who was threatened to be sent to Newgate for life, and being greatly harassed, he became insane, and died in a lunatic asylum ! Both the churchwardens likewise were so worried by the results of the suit, and by the reflections of the parishioners, that they died ; the one shortly after, and the other within a very few years ! The amount of costs was finally raised by private subscription, but great excitement and acrimony of feeling continued for a long time.

In Braintree, Essex, the opposition to church-rates has been carried on successfully for seventeen years, by a majority of the parishioners. The first legal proceedings were in 1837, on a rate of £532., or 3s. in the pound, chiefly for repairs of the church. Burder a dissenter having refused payment of his share, which was £60., on the ground that the rate was made by the churchwardens after the vestry had adjourned the question for twelve months, he was proceeded against in the Consistory Court of the Bishop of London ; when a dissenters' committee was organised, and a general subscription raised, to defend the action. Dr. Lushington pronounced sentence against him in the same year. A writ of prohibition, being moved for in the Court of Queen's Bench, was granted in 1840. The churchwardens next carried the case by writ of error to the Exchequer Chamber, where the judges in 1841 affirmed the prohibition, and thus terminated the first Braintree case—*Veley v. Burder*. The costs of opposition amounted to £624., which having been taxed, the churchwardens were compelled to pay £264 !

The dilapidations of the edifice still increasing, the second case in the same parish was commenced about three months after. Acting on a suggestion of the chief justice in delivering the former judgment, the churchwardens now called a vestry, and proposed a rate, which the vestry refused to grant. Affidavit of the refusal was made by the vicar to the Consistory Court as before. The churchwardens and parishioners being cited to appear and show cause for and against the rate, the latter did not attend, and a monition was issued to make a rate.

About Midsummer 1841 the churchwardens convened another vestry, at which a rate of two shillings in the pound was moved and seconded. A large majority then carried an amendment refusing to make a rate, and alleging that all compulsory payments for the religious services of any sect appeared to the vestry to be unsanctioned by scripture, and opposed to the pure and spiritual character of the religion of Christ. One of the churchwardens, being the defendant in error, conceived that the supporters of the amendment had by this course abandoned their functions as vestrymen ; he therefore proposed to the other ratepayers to make the rate. This was done by a small minority —the chairman, the two churchwardens, and eighteen of the parishioners signing it ; the mover and seconder of the amendment protesting against it. Gosling, a parishioner, now appealed against the rate, on the ground that it had been made contrary to the resolution of a majority of the vestry. The cause was then carried again into the Consistory Court, where Dr. Lushington rejected the libel of the churchwardens. In the Court of Arches that decision was reversed ; but in the Queen's Bench and the Exchequer Chamber the validity of the rate was affirmed. The case ultimately came before the House of Peers on appeal early in 1852, and was left for the decision of the judges. These were equally divided, five being for and five against the validity of the rate : their opinions were ordered to be printed, and the matter is still postponed by the Lord Chancellor, for further consideration ! The costs of opposition in this second case, *Veley v. Gosling*, up to the judgment in the Exchequer Chamber only, were about £550. ; while by proceeding in the usual way before a magistrate, and appealing to the quarter sessions, the costs would have been comparatively trifling. Veley, one of the churchwardens, and also the solicitor for the suit,

paid £900. toward the costs in support of the rate in these cases, out of his own pocket, £700. more being contributed by a friend !

These instances relate to two parishes only, out of those brought under the notice of the Parliamentary Committee. Surely it is high time to close the door by fair, constitutional measures, against such disgusting and ruinous conflicts !

Dr. Lushington stated, in the course of the proceedings, that various extraneous items, such as expenses of highways and acts of Parliament, have been occasionally included in church-rates. One of the witnesses asserted what can be easily proved—that rewards for the destruction of noxious animals were frequently paid out of this rate in rural districts. It is not improbable that the poor animals themselves were brought up and baited in former times, on payment of the reward. There has also been a great variety in the mode of rating, and in the kind of property rated. In many large parishes the amount is now raised by voluntary contributions, which may be hailed as the commencement of a more equitable system ! Had the principles of common justice been applied to the question of these rates, dissenters would have been exempted long since from the imposition of this most unreasonable levy.

2nd. Section—*Mortuaries.*

These are a sort of ecclesiastical heriots, claimed by custom in different countries, and in many parishes of England, as due to the minister on the death of each of the parishioners.¹ Originally they were voluntary bequests or donations to the church, intended, it is said, as amends to the clergy for the personal tithes and other ecclesiastical dues, which the party while living may have neglected or forgotten to pay. The lord's heriot, or best chattel, was taken out first; the second-best was reserved to the church as a *mortuary*, and was called in the decrees of King Canute, “soul-scot” or soul money.²

By the laws of Venice, personal tithes, omitted to be paid during the life of the party, were to be satisfied at his death out of his chattels. By a similar policy in France, every man that died without bequeathing part of his estate to the church, which

¹ Blackstone's *Commentaries*, ii. 28—2.

² *Ibid.*

was called “dying without confession,” was formerly deprived of “Christian burial;” and if he died intestate, his relations and the bishop appointed arbitrators to determine what should be given to the church. The French Parliament in 1409 redressed this grievance.¹

In England, the mortuary was formerly “brought to church along with the corpse, and thence called ‘a corse-present.’” In the reign of Henry III., about the year 1200, bequests of mortuaries were held to be necessary parts of testaments of chattels, and without them the will was void. Some of these strange demands have been abolished, but mortuaries are still claimed in many parishes. By the 21st of Henry VIII., c. 6, the highest sum to be demanded was fixed at ten shillings.²

It has been found very difficult to ascertain correctly the whole amount annually received for mortuaries; but it probably reaches some thousands.

These payments were considered to be due, in times of Romish superstition, for the saying of masses and tolling of bells for the benefit of departed souls. Edward I., about 1300, passed many laws to restrain the oppressive power of the clergy. Till his time, all the goods of intestate persons were considered to belong to the bishop or ordinary; but it was then enacted that the bishop should discharge out of them the debts of the deceased! The control over testamentary matters, still allowed in Britain to ecclesiastical courts and persons, is evidently a relic of ancient superstition and usurpation, and ought to be entirely abolished. At present, it constitutes a source of considerable emolument and influence.

3rd Section.—*Easter Offerings.*

In ancient times, the popish clergy or priests were presented with gifts at “church festivals,” for special religious services. Such as withheld the usual oblations were threatened with ecclesiastical censures and temporal calamities. These donations soon felt the transmuting power of custom, and from being optional they were made imperative. Some parishes have allowed them to be commuted into a small rent-charge, though generally excepted from the Tithe Commutation Act.

¹ Blackstone's *Commentaries*, ii. 28—2.

² Ibid.

A late writer estimates “oblations, offerings, and compositions at £80,000. a-year!”¹

There were also in the days of popery—and probably they are still maintained among catholics—diriges or dirges, obits, soul-masses, moneth-myndes, year-myndes, trentals, &c., &c. being superstitious services for the repose of departed souls, or rather contrivances for extracting money from the affection of surviving relatives, but happily swept away by protestantism. The besom requires however to be still further applied!

4th Section.—Surplice Fees.

Beside the forementioned, are those termed surplice fees, derived from official services at “marriages, christenings, churchings and burials,” but objected to by many pious and enlightened reformers. The rate of payment is fixed by custom in each parish, and they are computed, by a very uncertain estimate, to produce an annual aggregate of half a million sterling!²

Wealthy persons often made presents to the ministers for special services, and by degrees this generosity was claimed as a regular fee, which led to frequent contentions between the receivers and the people; till the pope decreed that whatever had been customary should be paid in each place.³ On this insufficient ground of custom, many unreasonable payments have been and still are exacted! Archbishop Langton ordained in 1210, “We do firmly enjoin that no sacrament of the church or burial of the dead, shall be denied to any one upon the account of a sum of money.”⁴ This regulation was urged by other authorities, and with respect to the former it was the general understanding.

To the fees required by ministers for particular services, objections were repeatedly made by individuals and by assembled churches. In 747, Cuthbert, Archbishop of Canterbury convening a synod of bishops, apparently for the better regulation of ecclesiastical matters; one of the regulations was, that no money should be taken for the baptism of infants. By two councils held at Rheims, about 1120 and 1188, it was decreed that payment should not be exacted for baptism, chrism,

¹ See Wade's Unreformed Abuses.

² Wade, 1849.

³ Sarpi on Benefices, chap. xxviii.

⁴ Burn's Ecclesiastical Law.

burial, consecration, church hallowing, &c. Wicliffe asserted in 1370 that “ no priest ought to sell, by bargaining and covenant, his ghostly travail, nor his masses, nor his prayers, nor God’s word, nor hallowings, nor baptism, nor confirming, nor order givings ; for weddings, for shrift, (or confession) for housel (or the eucharist), nor for anointing. To ask or take any worldly man’s reward,” said he, “ for any of those or for any ghostly thing, he errs and doth wrong ! ”¹

The priests were especially bitter against the Waldenses in the fourteenth century, because they objected to payments for particular religious services.²

Milton writes on this subject as follows :—“ Let us see what hath been thought of that other maintenance beside tithes, which of all protestants, our English divines only or most apparently require and take ! These are fees for christenings, marriages, and burials ; and though whoso will may give freely, yet being not of right, but of free gift, if they be exacted or established, they become unjust in them who are otherwise maintained. Of such evil note are they, that even the Council of Trent makes liable to the laws against simony those who take or demand fees, for administering any sacrament. With like severity it condemns the giving or taking for a benefice ; and the celebration of marriages, christenings, and burials for fees exacted ; nor counts it less simony to sell the ground or place of burial. In a State assembly at Orleans, 1561, it was decreed that nothing should be exacted for administering sacraments, burials, or any other spiritual function. Thus much that council ; and truly if the minister be maintained for his whole ministry, why should he be twice paid for any part thereof ? Why should he, like a servant, seek vails over and above his wages ? That zealous antiquary, Sir Henry Spelman, proves by many canons, and some even of corrupt times, that fees for sacraments, marriages, and especially for interments, are wicked, simoniacial and abominable ! Yet thus is the church, for all this noise of reformation, still left unreformed ! ”³

On the occasion of a bill brought into Parliament in 1851, for the abolition of intramural interments, strenuous efforts were made to secure to all the parochial ministers affected by the measure, full compensation for the loss of their “ vested interests,” in the abolition of some of the fees ! Surely these are

¹ Fox’s Acts and Mon.

Milner.

² Considerations on Hirelings.

indications of a bondage to ecclesiastical domination propped up by the power of the state, but which the influence of Christian principle, if brought to bear upon it, would speedily dissolve!

5th Section.—Pew Rents.

In edifices erected under the Church Building Acts, these form the sole or main income of the ministers, and they are a very considerable item in perpetual curacies: in some modern cases deficiencies are made up out of the church-rates.

It is almost impossible to arrive at their value: they are supposed however by some to produce nearly £200,000. a-year.¹ Much doubt has been thrown on the value of the parochial incomes, stated in the Report of the Commissioners to Parliament in 1835, and it was also very defective in not specifying the amount of each particular kind.

In Rome a large proportion of the ecclesiastical revenues is said to be derived from lotteries, unblushingly encouraged without regard to time or place!²

6th Section.—Indirect Demands.

The claims on the people of England for the objects before stated, being made in a direct form, are naturally felt by those who conscientiously object to the episcopal modes and services of religion to be oppressive and unjust. Beside these there are however numerous indirect claims, for the support of the same forms and services, yet mixed with larger demands for other objects: it is therefore almost impossible to trace the application and to make a distinction. Such are the testamentary and registration perquisites, the many payments to episcopal chaplains in public departments, in gaols, hospitals, asylums and work-houses; in the army and navy; beside fellowships and masterships in colleges and schools,³ &c., &c. In short, wherever the state founds an institution or plants a colony, there the Episcopal church steps in to exercise her influences, and to claim compensation for her ministers. Scarcely a session of Parliament passes, without some proposition for an extension of the interests of this

¹ Church Property and Revenues.

² Gavazzi's Lectures.

³ The cost of chaplains in the army and navy is computed to be £25,000. a year.—*Eclectic Review.*

one church, at the cost of the nation at large! To obviate the unfairness by an endowment of other churches and ministers would, if it were possible, only be to increase the mischief, to inflict a deep wound on their independent and spiritual character, and to impair the true interests of religion. The multiplication of places of worship, when those already built though equally convenient are half empty, serves little other purpose than to provide situations for more ecclesiastics at the public cost! Let the Anglican church and the other different denominations erect as many edifices for divine worship as they please, so long as they do it at their own charge, and maintain them afterwards without expense to their fellow-professors. But for any to be empowered to thrust their hands into the pockets of their neighbours for such purposes is surely unreasonable and unjust, and altogether opposed to the Christian command, to do to others as we would they should do to us! Would that the authorities of that church and of the nation could be prevailed on, before it is too late, to redress these grievances constitutionally, and to place all the religious bodies on a fair, equal, Christian basis.

The amount of these indirect demands is not easily computed. "The Clergy List for 1853" enumerates 16 chaplains to the forces, 102 for the navy, 12 for government prisons, 130 for county and borough prisons; 21 chaplains and 48 assistant chaplains to the East India Company, in the Calcutta diocese; 11 chaplains and 22 assistants in the Madras diocese; 7 chaplains and 21 assistants in the Bombay diocese, and so on in the several dioceses of Colombo, Victoria, Cape Town, Quebec, Montreal, Toronto, Nova Scotia, Fredericton and Newfoundland; beside eleven more dioceses in the West Indies, Australia, New Zealand and Gibraltar. A very large aggregate number is thus formed!

Beside the foregoing are the glebe lands, estimated by the *Quarterly Review* to be 8,000 in number and worth about £500,000;¹ and the parsonages are nearly as numerous: the annual value of both is probably £250,000.: to say nothing of the "churches and church-yards," from which further income is in many places derived, for monuments, sepulchral grants, &c. &c.

¹ Pebrer values the glebes at £20. each on an average, or £160,000. a-year.

CHAPTER XIII.

EXTENSIVE CHANGES INTRODUCED, WITH RESPECT TO TITHES, CHURCH PROPERTY AND PATRONAGE, ON THE CONTINENT OF EUROPE.

1. FRANCE.

Tithes were abolished throughout this country in 1789, at the very commencement of the revolution, as among the grievances most obviously requiring to be redressed. The amount fell into the hands of the proprietors and cultivators of the soil. The other landed property of the French Catholic church, producing annually about four millions sterling, and said to exceed one-third of all the land in the kingdom, was confiscated in the same year, and placed at the disposal of the nation. The salaries of the Catholic clergy were generally reduced to about a fifth of the former amounts, the ministers of all denominations being placed on the same ground, and paid very moderate stipends out of the public treasury.¹ The ecclesiastical constitution was remodelled, and the important principle introduced into it, of the bishops and ministers being elected by the people, instead of being appointed by the government.² The cathedrals and chapters were suppressed. In some of these particulars a degree of reaction has since taken place; the pope and the government having regained a large share of authority in the appointment of bishops.

2. BELGIUM.

Tithes and rent-charges were abolished here also in 1789, and the other ecclesiastical property was made over to the nation,

¹ A French archbishop is stated to have £1041. a year, a bishop £625., an archdeacon £166., a canon or prebendary £100., a rector £48., and a curate £31.—See *Wade's Unreformed Abuses*, 1849.

² Alison's History of Europe, &c.

which provides for the support of the ministers of all denominations, for the expenses of divine worship, the building and repairing of churches and parsonage houses, and the maintenance of the educational establishments. These charges are annually defrayed by the respective communes, or by the national government. An allowance for the Jewish worship is included with the rest. The whole cost to the state in 1849 was about 4,300,000 francs, or £172,000.¹

3. HOLLAND.

In some provinces tithes were commuted in 1798, and amalgamated with the public treasury; in one province they were suppressed by Napoleon in 1811; but in others they still remain. In 1795 the state took possession of the church property, which was of great value, and in return it provides in chief part for the stipends of ministers of all denominations, except the Mennonites or Baptists, who decline to receive its aid. Each congregation generally maintains its place of worship, but when deficiencies occur they are made good from the funds of the province or state. In 1816 the government reorganized the reformed church. The state not being connected with any particular religious community, no partiality is shown.

4. GERMANY.

The district on the left bank of the Rhine is still regulated, in great measure, by the "Code Napoleon." Tithes were extinguished in 1795, and the government guarantees to ministers of all professions an income of 500 francs or £21. in the rural districts, and twice that amount in the towns. The state does not professedly favour any particular denomination. The places of worship are maintained either by congregational collections or by grants from the communes.

In Hanover tithes still subsist. The places of worship are supported by the ecclesiastical funds, and by the contributions of the people.

In Bremen the abolition of tithes has been concluded on, but

¹ For further particulars see Raynard's *Present Reformed Churches*, vol. ii.

the terms are not yet settled, or the settlement, if it has taken place, is very recent. The places of worship are repaired as in Hanover.

In Hamburg tithes are unknown. Stipends to ministers and all other expenses of divine worship, are defrayed out of voluntary contributions and congregational property.

In Mecklenburg tithes were abolished at the time of the reformation. The minister has the produce of a small piece of land in each parish, with contributions in food and money from the people; the whole being of very small amount. Each place of worship is maintained by the patron and people jointly. The government is more closely connected with the Lutheran Church than with any other.

5. AUSTRIA.

The Roman Catholic ministers formerly received the tithes; but the following mode of suppressing them has been recently determined on. The tithe-claimant is to lose one-third, the state is to pay another third, and the landowner is to contribute the remaining third. The last two are to be capitalized, or converted into a fund, for the Catholic ministers. The privileges of Protestants have been much extended.

6. GALLICIA, CRACOW, AND RUSSIAN POLAND.

Historians relate that a proportion of not less than two-thirds of the revenue of the land in Poland was appropriated in the thirteenth century to ecclesiastical purposes. In 1573, at the Reformation, perfect equality of rights and privileges was introduced and secured to religious professors of all denominations.

Tithes are still paid by the landholders to the Roman Catholic or Greek ministers. Those of the Protestants generally derive their incomes from the government and the congregations jointly. The cost of maintaining the places of worship is divided between the patron and the members of each church. In Russian Poland no religious community is specially favoured.

7. SWEDEN, DENMARK, AND NORWAY.

On the accomplishment of the Reformation, all ecclesiastical property in each of these countries was placed under the management of the state, to make provision for the support of the ministers, and for the establishment of colleges, hospitals and poor-houses; the surplus to be applied to the secular purposes of the nation. In Denmark, a complete separation of the church from the state is said to be in progress. In Norway the church was of old richly endowed. Since the new order of things, all its property, except the parochial glebes and some other reserved farms, has been sold, to the amount of two millions of dollars. The capital has been invested, and the proceeds are applied in great part, it is believed, to educational purposes. A committee of the Storthing superintends church affairs.¹

8. RUSSIA PROPER.

There are no tithes, either in this country, or generally in the Greek or Oriental churches. Tithes of corn were formerly paid from the estates of the church, and applied to support the collegiate schools for training ministers; but in 1764 the government took possession of these estates, and engaged to provide for the seminaries. The support of the Russian or Greek priests is derived partly from the state, and partly from the free-will offerings of the people. Their stipends are comparatively small. Peter the Great abolished the offices of patriarch and exarch, or heads of the Greek church, and instituted in their room metropolitans and an ecclesiastical synod. The bishops are nominated by the synod, but selected by the emperor. The Empress Catherine II. deprived the monasteries and convents of their estates, out of which she gave small annual salaries to the bishops and clergy, applying the remainder to the support of hospitals and poor-houses.² The three metropolitans receive each about £200. a-year; an archbishop has £150., and a bishop something less, with fees and presents in addition.³

¹ Forrester's Norway. ² Pinkerton's Greek Church. ³ Kohl's Russia.

9. SWITZERLAND.

From the tithes and lands which anciently belonged to the Roman Catholic Church, the protestant cantons derived a fund after the reformation, sufficient to afford competent salaries to the established ministers, and also to defray, with little or no addition, all the other expenses of the state.¹

10. ITALY.

In this country—the centre and stronghold of priestly corruption and usurpation, the swarming ecclesiastics appear to eat out one another; and what is far worse, in most Catholic countries they eat out also the poor half-starved people on whom they live! Yet even here the salaries of most are now comparatively moderate: a cardinal having from £400. to £500. a year, the rector of a parish £30., and a curate £17.² The majority of the monastic establishments have been confiscated and sold, to pay the national debts. This was a very general effect of the French revolution on the continent of Europe.³ At Rome the revenues of the church are said to be still twice as large as those of the state!

11. UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

In the new world the tithe system never obtained a permanent footing. In Virginia, which was colonized by Episcopilians, attempts were made to establish it, but they were not long successful, although both there and in some of the other colonies, a forced maintenance for ministers of religion, being urged by the government at home, was for a time upheld by law; nor was it wholly discontinued till the era of independence, 1776.

¹ Smith's Wealth of Nations, v. 1. ² Wade's Unreformed Abuses, &c.

³ An intelligent traveller observes that, since the revolution, the position of the clergy in the Anglican and Catholic churches has been reversed; the latter being now in most cases poor, simple and laborious, which gives them great place with the people, while many of the English and Irish established ministers are full and indolent. The effect has been unfavourable to the true interest of protestantism.—*Laing's Notes*.

12. BRITISH COLONIES.

A report made to the Canadian parliament in 1852, represents the income of the "clergy reserved fund" to have been applied as follows:—

| | £ s. d. |
|--|-----------------|
| Church of England, Upper Canada | 12,646 7 11 |
| Ditto Lower Canada | 2,173 17 6 |
| Church of Scotland, Upper Canada | 7,114 17 2 |
| Ditto Lower Canada | 1,086 18 9 |
| United Synod, Presbyterian, Upper Canada | 565 13 0 |
| Roman Catholic, Upper Canada | 1,666 13 4 |
| Wesleyan Methodists, Upper Canada | 777 15 6 |
| Total | £26,032 3 2 |

The question of the disposal of these funds is likely to engage the attention of the British legislature.

In Australia, a disposition has lately been evinced by the Roman Catholic and Wesleyan, as well as by the Episcopal ministers, to reject the pecuniary aid of the government at home, and so far to repudiate the alliance between the parent state and these colonial churches!

Thus have many of the nations of Christendom taken opportunities to throw off or greatly to diminish the imposition of tithes, and to convert the lands of each national church to purposes deemed to be consistent with the general interests of religion. It is not of course assumed that their present arrangements are altogether satisfactory, inasmuch as they have been generally based on the principle of state maintenance, or pecuniary hire for the ministry of the gospel. Yet the steps hitherto taken are obviously steps in advance, and likely to lead, by degrees, as the Christian world grows in grace and truth, to further and more complete reformation in these and other respects.

In France and several other continental countries, some of the ministers of religion decline to receive stipends from the state, because accompanied with conditions onerous to

the conscience, in relation to the doctrines which shall be taught. For instance, in the French protestant church, the ministers are said to be sometimes forbidden to preach on regeneration and the work of the Holy Spirit. Those who decline to come under such restrictions, generally withdraw from the state churches and depend on the voluntary contributions of their hearers. In many districts, however, a good deal of latitude is allowed. Very generally mere morality is preached rather than christianity. Some denominations altogether refuse, on conscientious grounds, to receive pay for their ministers from the state, and support them by private contributions. It does not appear that any religious body objects to all pecuniary compensation for the ministry, although certain individual preachers decline to accept it.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ESTIMATES OF THE TOTAL ANNUAL REVENUES OF THE STATE CHURCH IN ENGLAND AND WALES.

THE income of the protestant episcopal church in England and Wales, or in other words its annual cost to the nation, is computed very differently by different writers: parliamentary returns also are in general partial and unsatisfactory; and it is by no means easy to form a conclusive calculation of the total amount.

The avowed friends of the establishment have often spoken in strong terms of its poverty! The Earl of Chatham called the income of the established church in Great Britain and Ireland "a pittance;" but estimated it at three millions sterling! Watson, Bishop of Llandaff, in "a letter addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury," and published in 1783, adopted the same strain; confidently stating that the whole revenues of the church, including bishoprics, deans and chapters, rectories and vicarages, with dignities and benefices of all kinds, and even the two universities with their colleges, did not then amount, upon the most liberal calculation, to a million and a half! Yet about the same time, Arthur Young, a very competent authority, estimated the whole ecclesiastical income at five millions.¹

Pebrer, a Spanish statician, computed the total revenues in 1833 at £3,872,138.² The commissioners of inquiry reported to parliament in 1835 "the income of benefices with and without cure of souls" to be £3,251,159. But the returns, though professing to include all classes of income, must be admitted to have been in many cases very far below the actual value! Great deductions were made for alleged expenses.

A late author³ sets down the revenue of the established ministers of England and Wales at the very large amount of

¹ See "Church Property and Revenues," pamphlet, 1850.

² "Taxation, Capital, &c. of British Empire."

³ "Remarks on the Consumption of Public Wealth," &c

£9,459,565. Another writer¹ states that, according to the returns of the tithe commissioners, the incomes of the clergy from tithe rent-charge and tithes alone, amounted to £6,480,000. In these estimates no deduction appears to be made for impropriations, the proportion of which is not well ascertained, but is computed to be one-third of the whole.

The same author gives the following estimate of the entire revenues of the established church:²—

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| Church tithes | £6,480,000 |
| Incomes of the bishoprics ³ | 197,493 |
| Cathedrals and collegiate churches ⁴ | 360,095 |
| Glebes and parsonage houses | 250,000 |
| Perpetual curacies, £75. each | 75,000 |
| Benefices not parochial, £250. each | 32,450 |
| Surplice fees on burials, marriages, christenings, &c. | 500,000 |
| Oblations, offerings and compositions | 80,000 |
| University and school foundations | 932,300 |
| Lectureships in towns and populous places | 60,000 |
| Chaplainships and offices in public institutions | 10,000 |
| New churches and chapels | 188,100 |
| Great Total | <u>£9,165,438</u> |

A very recent pamphlet,⁵ the author of which appears to have investigated the subject carefully, gives the following as an approximate calculation:—

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| Tithes | £3,148,232 |
| Glebes | 509,275 |
| Parsonages and churches, not including those erected by parliamentary grants | 500,000 |
| Churches of recent date, for which £1,744,196. 9s. 6d. has been granted (3 per cent.) | 52,325 |
| Surplice fees | 500,000 |
| Church rates | 600,000 |
| Episcopal and capitular revenues, as returned in 1835, including "separate revenues" | 541,726 |
| Universities, &c. | 2,000,000 |
| Drawback on materials used in building churches | 244,196 |
| Total | <u>£8,095,754</u> |

¹ Wade, in his "Unreformed Abuses in Church and State."

² Ibid. ³ From the Returns of 1843.

⁴ See Returns of Ecclesiastical Revenues, 1835.

⁵ "Church Property and Revenues in England and Wales, 1850."

In addition he notes "city and town assessments, pew-rents, chaplaincies, fragments of tithe (not previously demanded, but now gleaned by commissioners), clerical surrogates, &c."

Various methods may be adopted for arriving at some tolerable degree of correctness on this subject.

1st. According to the third report of the Emigration Committee presented in 1838, England and Wales contain 37,094,400 acres of land; of which 4,361,400 acres were then considered unprofitable, and 3,984,000 were uncultivated wastes capable of improvement. Of the last two areas, upwards of one million of acres may be fairly computed to have been brought into cultivation since that date, viz. within twenty-five years. We thus have in round numbers thirty millions of acres of cultivated land in England and Wales at the present time—1853, producing a supposed average rental of £1. per acre. From this quantity deduct one-tenth,¹ or three millions, for lands exempt from tithe rent-charge, as having belonged to religious houses, or being free by modus, prescription, mergers and other causes; and there remain twenty-seven millions of acres subject to tithe rent-charge. A further deduction must be made for the lands, subject altogether or in part to inappropriate rent-charge, supposed to be one-third of the whole; and the remainder will be about eighteen millions of acres, subject to ecclesiastical rent-charge, and producing at four shillings per acre,² or one-fifth of the rent, £3,600,000 annually. To this sum add £400,000 for tithes on fisheries, mills and minerals, and for assessments in London and other large places; and the whole amount will be four millions of pounds sterling for England and Wales at the present time!

2nd. The annual value of the agricultural produce of England and Wales has been estimated by M'Culloch and Porter at £132,500,000. The proportion which tithes bear to the gross produce is computed to be not less than that of one to twenty. According to this rate, the amount of the whole tithe rent-charge would be about £6,625,000, subject to the same deductions of one-tenth for tithe-free lands, and of one-third for

¹ See Quarterly Review.

² The returns to the Board of Agriculture in 1813, stated the average rate of tithes to be 7s. 9½d. per acre at that time. Assessed to Poor-rates in 1841, landed property thirty-two and a-half millions; assessed to Income-tax, in 1843, landed property forty millions, and tithes two millions.—See *Companion to Almanac*, 1843 and 1846.

impropriations ; and a result is left, nearly approaching to that before computed, of four millions.

3rd. The commissioners for effecting the tithe commutation reported to Parliament, in 1850, that they had much work still before them ; but that rent-charges had already been assigned to the value of more than £3,900,000. From this must be deducted the third for the impropriations, leaving £2,600,000 for ecclesiastical rent-charge commuted under the commissioners : add £400,000 as before, for tithes on fisheries, mills and minerals, and for city and town assessments uncommuted ; also £300,000 for tithes before commuted ; and £600,000 for others remaining to be commuted, for perpetual curacies, &c. This again produces a total of about £4,000,000. So that from these various methods we get a result, after the necessary deductions are made, very nearly the same.

Other statements and grounds of computation might be resorted to, but they appear to be generally incorrect or partial, and are therefore unsatisfactory. According to the returns already quoted, made to the royal commission by the parochial ministers, and published in 1835, the gross annual revenues of the state church then amounted to £3,938,051, and the net yearly receipts to £3,439,767 ; but the statements were generally considered to be defective, no replies being made by some, and those of others being obscure and evasive. Baptist W. Noel however takes them for granted as being correct ! Even the "*Clergy List*" for the present year (1853) returns the rent-charge in some of the parishes at the sums reported in 1835, although the amounts of commutation in the same parishes are very considerably higher !¹ Between the returns made to Parliament in 1835 for the information of the public, and the statements of actual receipts laid before the commissioners as a basis for the commutation, there is a striking and not very commendable discrepancy ! The average increase of the commuted rent-charge over the former amount of tithe appears to have been at least $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., perhaps much more.

¹ To take the first instance.—The return of 1835 for a parish in Cornwall stated its net vicarial income derived from all sources at £303. : and this amount is retained on the "*Clergy List*" for 1853, although the vicarial rent-charge alone has long been settled by commutation at £500., independent of all fees and perquisites ! This is far from being a solitary case. Twelve adjacent parishes are understated by at least one-fifth !

The computation of the total revenues of the established church in England and Wales, according to the three modes before referred to, will be—

| | |
|--|------------|
| Ecclesiastical tithe rent-charge commuted, and tithes, &c. uncommuted ¹ | £4,000,000 |
| Glebe lands and parsonages | 500,000 |
| Income from lands and other property belonging to archbishops and bishops | 250,000 |
| Revenues of prebends and other officers of cathedrals (beside tithe rent-charge) | 350,000 |
| ,, of universities, colleges, &c. (ditto ditto ²) | 250,000 |
| Surplice fees | 500,000 |
| Pew-rents, Easter offerings, mortuaries, chaplaincies, allowances, &c. | 400,000 |
| Church-rates | 500,000 |
| | £6,750,000 |

This is the most correct estimate which appears to be deducible from the various returns, and from the opinions of those who have written on the subject, and is believed to be below the truth. Other indirect levies are however to be added. In a parliamentary return (1843) the following sums are stated to have been voted out of the taxes, for religious worship in England, Scotland and Ireland, since 1800:—

| | |
|--|------------|
| England, established | £2,935,646 |
| Scotland, ditto | 522,082 |
| Ireland, ditto | 1,749,818 |
| Total for established churches | £5,207,546 |
| Church of Rome | 365,007 |
| Protestant dissenters | 1,019,647 |
| Total sums voted for established and non-established churches in forty-two years | £6,592,200 |

¹ This sum includes the "appropriations," being the tithe rent-charge held by archbishops, bishops, deans and chapters, and other ecclesiastical bodies.

² Professor Jones computed the revenues of the two universities of Oxford and Cambridge at £832,300., probably including their tithes. The number of students at Oxford and Cambridge is comparatively small, being about 1200 at each.

Nearly five-sixths of this amount, it will be seen, are for the national churches—episcopal and presbyterian!

By a return made to Parliament in 1838, the drawbacks on materials for the construction of churches in Great Britain, had in 1837 amounted in twenty years to £170,561 for 609 edifices, or on an average to £280 each!

The whole revenue of the established church in England and Wales, or in other terms its cost to the nation, cannot then be taken at less in round numbers than *Seven Millions sterling!* Most modern writers have computed it at more. The charges of the twenty-five bishops and established churches in the colonies are also very considerable.

The unequal division of these vast revenues is highly objectionable, as well as the total amount. To form a correct estimate of the annual emoluments of each see is almost impossible; the returns being evidently far below the reality.

In 1836 an act was passed, incorporating certain bishops and others as “ecclesiastical commissioners for England and Wales,” with full power to examine and regulate the dioceses, revenues, and patronages; as already referred to in the 20th chapter, page 185. According to the scale then laid down, the income of the Archbishop of Canterbury was fixed to be £15,000, and of York £10,000; of the Bishop of London £10,000, Durham £8,000, Winchester £7,000; of four others £5,000 each, and of nineteen remaining sees, about £4,000 each. Total £146,700.² These amounts are however acknowledged to be much under the sums which have been actually received by many of the bishops since that time; while previously the incomes of the more wealthy were at least double this scale, and the poorer ones below it. Enormous sums have been received by some of the bishops, for new leases of the lands attached to the sees, which have formed a principal source of income; of this fore-stalling many gross instances might be stated. Endeavours have been repeatedly used to abolish the practice, but they have not been carried out with sufficient strictness.

The septennial return made to Parliament in 1851, states the actual cost of the episcopate in England and Wales at about £200,000. a year; which sum is unequally shared between two archbishops and twenty-six bishops; the largest single income

¹ Companion to Almanac, 1839.

² Baptist W. Noel.

being about £38,000, and the smallest about £2,000 a year.¹ By an order in council issued in that year, their total revenues were fixed and somewhat equalized, but the amounts continue to be exceeded.

The same principle has been applied to the incomes of the "cathedral clergy," which were intended to stand in future thus:—

| | |
|--|----------|
| 26 Deans at £1680 | £43,680 |
| 104 Canons at £800 | 83,200 |
| 156 Minor Canons at £150 | 23,400 |
| Total income of cathedral clergy . . . | £150,280 |

Prior to the act of 1836, as well as since, some of these officials have received emoluments far exceeding this rate.

Among the incumbents or parochial ministers, a similar inequality of remuneration exists. The whole number of "the clergy" in England and Wales is stated to be 16,010: of these 3,087 have no duties to attend to, leaving 12,923 working ministers, (or 7693 beneficed clergy and 5,230 curates,) for 10,533 benefices, forming 11,077 parishes.² In round numbers 200, according to their own returns, possess incomes, varying from £1,000 upwards to £7,000 each: 400 have £750 and upwards: 1000 have £500 and upwards: 8,600 average about £300: 3,800 £250: while 1,500 are said to receive about £100 each! The salaries of the curates are represented to average £81.³

According to the diocesan returns of 1850, more than one-fourth of the incumbents do not reside within their parishes; some being absent by exemption, others by licence, some through dilapidation of the churches or parsonage houses, and others through engagements at the universities, &c. &c.

The Ecclesiastical Commissioners appointed by the crown

¹ In France, the total charge of eighty Roman Catholic bishops is stated to be £42,500. In Spain, for forty-eight bishops £62,000.

² McCulloch, Horsman, Noel, &c.

³ The Wesleyan Conference body is said to have in England and Wales 1000 working itinerant ministers, who receive salaries ranging from about £75 to £350 each, beside about 6000 local ministers who receive no pay whatever. May those free labourers never surrender their duties and privileges to stipendiaries! The Independents have about 1,700 ministers, the Baptists 1,400, and small Wesleyan branches about 660.

strongly recommended, in 1850, that of the 777 livings in the patronage of the Lord Chancellor, 330, producing £200,000 a-year, should be sold, and that the proceeds, calculated at seven or ten years' purchase, should be applied to build new churches. A bold and strange proposition! In the next year, the House of Commons resolved that a provision should be made out of the resources of the established church itself, for "the existing spiritual destitution." It has also been proposed by a member of the parliamentary committee on church-rates, that the proceeds arising from the sale of those livings should be permanently invested, and the income applied for the repairs of the national places of worship.¹

The revenues of the state church in England and Wales, amounting according to the calculations already given, to seven millions per annum, are believed to exceed the whole civil income of most of the states of Europe, and to be much greater than those of any other church in the world, when at the same time the number of members or hearers is very much less than that of some other national churches. If the money were well applied in promoting the true interests of religion, it ought not to be grudged, since it is a mere trifle as compared with the cost of intemperance in this same country: but being enough with proper economy to evangelize the world, and yet largely expended in palaces, parks, and equipages; in luxury and too often in indolence, without generally producing the genuine fruits of christianity, though with many bright exceptions, it may well be viewed with regret and remonstrance. And so much the more, when regard is had to the pure, simple, scriptural pattern of the apostolic churches, and when the established church is considered as the church of a minority; while its support is imposed by the force of law on the whole nation; many of the people having at the same time to provide for their own churches!

The national census of population which was taken in 1851, and which was to report the number of attenders at the several places of worship on a given day in that year, has not yet been published, and therefore the proportion between the established

¹ The Lord Chancellor presents to all the livings under the value of £20 in "*liber regis*," according to which the tenths and first-fruits are paid. It does not contain the impropriations.

church and the other religious bodies is not ascertained. If a conjecture may be allowed, this result is anticipated—that nearly one-third of the whole population attend the episcopal worship, that another third frequent all the other places of worship, and that fully one-third absent themselves from any divine worship.¹ This, though a melancholy picture as respects the last class, is, it is feared, too true; and in vain are the expenditure of large sums of money and the erection of handsome buildings for worship, unless Christian education can be largely extended; and, under the power of the Holy Spirit, the saving truths of the gospel be brought home, by individual submission of heart, and by qualified, devoted, spontaneous labourers, to the minds and consciences of the masses.² The whole population of England and Wales, according to the census of 1841, was about sixteen millions.³

¹ Including sick persons and young children.

² It is computed, says a late statistician, that there are in England and Wales 28,290 churches and chapels, "as follows":—

| Denominations. | Churches, or Chapels | Per cent. |
|--|-------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Established Church | 14,000 | 49·49 |
| 2. Presbyterians | 150 | ·56 |
| 3. Independents | 2,572 | 9·09 |
| 4. Baptists | 1,943 | 6·87 |
| 5. Wesleyan Connexion | 4,450 | 15·78 |
| 6. Wesleyan New Connexion | 281 | ·99 |
| 7. Primitive Methodists | 1,662 | 5·87 |
| 8. Wesleyan Methodist Association | 322 | 1·10 |
| 9. Bible Christians | 415 | 1·47 |
| 10. Calvinistic Methodists | 778 | 2·76 |
| 11. Lady Huntingdon's Connexion | 30 | ·11 |
| 12. Unitarians | 260 | ·91 |
| 13. Quakers or Friends | 330 | 1·17 |
| 14. Various minor Protestant Sects | 500 | 1·72 |
| 15. Roman Catholics | 597 | 2·11 |
| | 28,290 | 100·00 |

From this table, which seems to have been framed with care, "it appears that rather more than half of the places of worship in England and Wales belong to Dissenters, Protestant or Roman Catholic; that those belonging to Protestants are 97·89 per cent., and those belonging to Roman Catholics are 2·11 per cent. of the whole number."—*Laid before the London Statistical Society*, 1852.

³ Baptist W. Noel assumes the "effective Anglicans" to be eight millions, or half of the whole population, "the Dissenters" (including Wesleyans) to be four millions, and those of "irreligious habits," the other four millions. If the number of "communicants" or members were taken, this picture would be utterly reversed!

Assuming the numbers of the episcopal church, and of all other churches together, to be, as already conjectured, nearly equal; what is the compulsory charge for the one, as compared with the voluntary charge of all the others? This, notwithstanding returns and calculations, must still be matter of uncertainty; but there is strong reason to believe that the revenues of the one are fifteen or twenty times as large as those of all the rest added together! Surely such a state of things loudly calls for national interposition and remedy! The reformation in this respect yet remains to be carried out and perfected, in Great Britain and Ireland!

CHAPTER XXV.

ON THE POWER AND DUTY OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND
PEOPLE, WITH RESPECT TO THE ECCLESIASTICAL ESTABLISH-
MENTS.

1st Section.—Introductory remarks.

MUCH has already been said on the endowments of the church, and its union with the state—on that priestly usurpation, which, springing up under the covert of ignorance and superstition, appropriated to itself the privileges and property of the whole spiritual body—on the gradual introduction of the system of tithes, and its imposition under specious pretences on the nations of western Europe—on the additional fees for particular religious services and objects — on the attaching these large pecuniary emoluments to the office of the gospel ministry—on the division of the general religious community into distinct churches—on the repeated transfers of the tithes and other perquisites from the ministers of one church to those of another, at the pleasure of the respective civil governments—on the conversion of the office of the state-established ministry possessing these endowments into a species of private transferable property—on the existence of patronage for the absolute disposal of these offices, without reference to the desire or judgment of the congregations—on the measures generally adopted on the continent of Europe, to correct some of these abuses,—and lastly, on the very large sums still annually expended, and the privileges bestowed in this country upon the ministry and worship of the one favoured denomination, armed with the authority of the law to enforce the contributions required for its maintenance, on the members of every religious community.

Though some of these points may require further elucidation in their development and effects, yet this seems a suitable place

to consider the following questions, which naturally suggest themselves :—1st, whether the British government and nation have not the power, and are not under a sacred obligation, to apply a remedy to these evils ; and 2nd, in what manner this national remedy can be most properly and wisely administered.

That the government and legislature of this country may, with the consent of the people, abolish the establishment of one particular church as that of the nation, no one who has paid attention to the subject, and considered the authority of imperial legislation can deny or doubt. Without revolutions, as in foreign countries, changes equally great have been introduced and effected in this kingdom, though not without considerable opposition from the party unjustly favoured, yet they have proved beneficial nationally ; and in this case a similar change is equally required, equally within the power of the government, and may be expected to be equally beneficial. The same reasoning applies to Scotland and Ireland.

One of the first duties of Christian government is to examine into the condition and wrongs of different classes, and to treat them all with consideration and fairness ; it is in fact to carry into practice the great gospel principle of doing unto others as we would that they should do unto us. Whatever infringes on this rule is a violation of Christian duty, whether in individuals or in governments. If we subject to its test the compulsion of a whole nation comprehending many Christian churches, to the maintenance of one particular church, the compulsion must at once be condemned. Let any who think otherwise place themselves in the position of those on whom the maintenance of this one church is imposed, contrary to their own religious convictions ; and they will quickly discover the injustice and injury of such a restrictive, compulsory policy ! The power and the duty are clearly manifest !

2nd Section.—The pecuniary part of the question.

Of the territorial property and revenues now possessed by the Anglican Church, the tithe rent-charge is by far the most important part. What the state has created and connected with the ministerial office, in opposition to the principles of the gospel—what it has given to one religious body or set of men, and taken

away from them, then given to others, and again taken away, and so on five or six times in succession,—what it has modified and partly abolished—what it at first provided for several purposes, and now suffers to be restricted to one—what it has permitted to be doubled and quadrupled—what it has allowed to be made a matter of bargain and sale, with the spiritual care of the souls of the people; yet guarding these transactions with jealous laws, as if afraid of its own doings and the proceedings of the receivers—what it has thus freely and repeatedly handled, and at length has commuted into a new form and character, to remove some of its more obvious ill effects—this surely, without doubt, it may still alter, otherwise apply, diminish or totally abolish, as the government and the people shall think proper!

If the British nation take the scriptural view of the free nature of the gospel ministry, they will, under a feeling of Christian duty, detach the payment entirely from such an object; and either extinguish it partly or wholly to afford relief to the agriculturists; or, regarding it as a public property, long alienated from the owners and cultivators of the soil, they will apply it to public purposes of civil and undisputed benefit, for the good of the community at large.

No reformatory measure can be based on just Christian principles, or be compatible with the religious liberties of the nation, which leaves all the temporalities, and especially the rent-charge, in the possession of one religious body. “I am sure,” says Dr. Arnold to a friend, “that sooner or later the church must be more comprehensive; or, if this be impracticable, then an establishment cannot be maintained; and the next best thing will be, to take care that all the church property is applied to strictly public purposes,—to schools, hospitals, almshouses, or something of the sort; and that it is not stolen by the landlords.”¹ This will doubtless be the wish of many reformers; and yet it cannot be forgotten that the property in question has been taken by degrees from the landlords and tenants.

The holding which each minister possesses in the ecclesiastical rent-charge, being generally deemed to be a contingent interest only for his own life, liable to be terminated earlier, and at his death reverting to the patron, is much more easily to be dealt with and abolished, than if it were an estate in

¹ Letter, 153.

fee belonging to the minister and his heirs in absolute right, and recognised as such by the law. But the fact is that it has evidently been regarded by the legislature as property of a questionable, uncertain nature, and subject to its own disposal.

Those who have treated on this subject may be divided into four classes. 1st. Such as style themselves the friends of the law-established church, and commend it warmly. These speak in high terms of its venerable institutions, its excellent liturgy, its pure doctrines, its meritorious clergy, its well deserved reputation and endowments. In their view, little or nothing requires to be corrected. 2nd. Are those who admit that much is amiss in the constitution of the church; that its liturgy and services need revision, that its expositions of doctrine require in many parts to be amended, that its ministers and bishops are unsuitably educated and chosen, and unequally remunerated, that they have too many secular duties, that the revenues require a better administration, and that some of the more obvious pressure on nonconformists ought to be removed. This class would act on a reformatory but strictly conservative principle: they would retain the substantial part of the temporalities, introduce laymen to a share in church government, and establish synodical action, curtailing the interference of the national legislature. 3rd. May be ranked most writers not belonging to the state church, who have treated of its abuses, its opulent, luxurious, indolent hierarchy, its opposite symbols of doctrine, its overpaid dignitaries, its tendency even now to an overbearing and persecuting spirit. These writers lean to exaggeration, to violent invective and indignant denunciation. 4th. Are those, to whom the author of this treatise desires to belong, who see very much that is amiss, but aim to deal with it in a Christian spirit, and to apply the necessary remedies in a considerate manner, peaceable but decided, constitutional but thorough-going; who believe that the cause of christianity and the true interest of the protestant episcopal church herself will be most effectually promoted, by putting all the different churches in the kingdom on an equal footing, and applying the ecclesiastical rent-charge and other national property which she at present possesses, to educational, charitable or other purposes of a strictly civil character. These would make every church dependent, under the divine blessing, on her own spontaneous exertions.

To quote the laudatory language of writers of the first class, when speaking of their beloved national church, would be unnecessary here; and the strong denunciations of the third class would be also at variance with the spirit, which it is desired that these pages may exhibit.

Lord Henley's scheme for church reform, published in 1828, seems to belong almost as much to the first class as to the second, and with some good suggestions, partakes largely of the character of an apology for things as they then were. Of course he does not interfere with the present application of the revenues, except by some improved distribution. The same may be said of writers in the *Quarterly Review*, and other publications in the same interest.

By individuals of the second class many schemes have been proposed, for removing some of the most glaring abuses of the law-established church, but the fault is that their views are not comprehensive towards the nation at large, and that they do not sufficiently admit the existence and rights of other Christian churches. An example of the sentiments of this class has lately been brought before the public.

A large number of "influential clergymen and laymen" are represented to have formed a society, with the limited view of effecting a "thoroughly conservative reformation" of the Anglican Church. They propose "That each clergyman hold no more than one living, and that he be resident thereon; that every attempt to sell a presentation to a living be punished by confiscation of the patronage to the parish, and every attempt to purchase a nomination be visited on the clerical delinquent, by a deprivation of holy orders; that no clergyman fill the office of a civil magistrate; that all canonries, deaneries, and prebendal stalls be abolished, and their revenues applied to the general purposes of the church; that its property be administered by a Board of Commissioners, composed exclusively of lay churchmen appointed by the government, and subject on all points to the jurisdiction and investigation of Parliament; that patrons submit the names of six persons to the congregation, in order that one may be chosen therefrom as the incumbent; each of the six so nominated having performed duty one whole Sunday before the election; that future occupiers of all livings now in the gift of the crown, bishops and other church digni-

taries be chosen by the communicant members of the congregation; that there be one hundred dioceses, as equal as possible; that each diocese be divided into four districts, each district being presided over by an archdeacon as an assistant bishop; that an annual synod take place of the clergy and churchwardens in each diocese, in the proportion of one half of each, presided over by the bishop, to take into consideration the spiritual state of the diocese; that a report of the same be submitted to a general council of the church, meeting once a-year, and consisting of the archbishops, bishops, and lay-delegates from each synod, to decide upon all matters of doctrine and discipline."

They also propose "That curates be paid £150. a-year; country incumbents, £250.; town incumbents, £350.; archdeacons, £750.; bishops, £2000. a-year; the archbishop of York, £4000.; and the archbishop of Canterbury, £5000. a-year; that church-rates, marriage and baptismal fees, and easter-offerings, be abolished; and that the bishops cease their attendance in the House of Lords."

What effect such movements may produce, time only will show. There appears, however, to be a growing conviction in the public mind that some decisive measure must be adopted. To leave the temporalities in the same hands with only a more equal distribution, is an arrangement which cannot satisfy dissenters, who consider the estates and revenues of the Anglican and Scotch churches to be national property, and at present unjustly applied.

Many able writers of the fourth class have shown the inconsistency of the union of church and state with the great principles of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom as laid down in the New Testament, and with the enlightened views of religious and civil freedom which justly distinguish the present age.¹ Few of these have, however, propounded any particular scheme for effecting a just and permanent arrangement.

In 1841, Thomas Spencer, perpetual curate of Hinton Charterhouse, near Bath, published the following proposals for a comprehensive church reformation:—

- " 1. The bishops to be removed from the House of Lords.
- " 2. The titles and offices of prelate, dean, archdeacon, canon, prebendary, and all other titles and offices connected with cathedrals, to be abolished.

¹ See Drs. Campbell and Wardlaw, Dymond and others.

- “ 3. The titles of rector, vicar and priest to be abolished.
- “ 4. The designation of the clergy to be ministers of religion, pastors, bishops and curates.
- “ 5. All patronage to cease, and an equitable adjustment to be made with existing patrons.
- “ 6. The revenues of bishoprics and cathedrals, with the income of all livings arising from tithes, glebe-lands, &c., to be vested in ecclesiastical commissioners.
- “ 7. The palaces of bishops and houses of deans and chapters to be sold, and the proceeds placed with such commissioners.
- “ 8. All clergymen desiring to do so, to be permitted to quit their profession.
- “ 9. Out of the ecclesiastical revenue raised as above, which would exceed six millions sterling, to appropriate for the present two millions to the payment of ministers of religion, giving to each an average of £200. a year.
- “ 10. To recommend to all congregations having the ability, that they support their own ministers.
- “ 11. To appropriate the remaining four millions to the purposes originally designed—the relief of the poor, the repair of parochial edifices, and other public objects; thus superseding the necessity for compulsory religion and compulsory charity, and abolishing all church rates and poor rates.
- “ 12. To transfer the relief of the poor to the inspection and care of the respective parishes and congregations.
- “ 13. To set apart those called divinity colleges in the universities, for the training of ministers, for their instruction in the doctrines and precepts of scripture—and at the other colleges to prepare all classes of men for their duty; by sound moral and political science, by public speaking, &c.
- “ 14. To allow the members of each congregation to elect their own minister out of such as have been thus trained, after having satisfied themselves of his fitness.
- “ 15. Instead of prelacy to institute a moderate practical episcopacy.
- “ 16. The duties of a bishop to be to preside at all clerical meetings, to visit every parish yearly, to appoint the minister whom the congregation have chosen, to visit the parochial schools, to investigate the state of the poor, to decide cases of difficulty, &c.

“17. A written invitation from the majority of the congregation to be a sufficient proof of election.

“18. The clergy to meet quarterly in each district, to administer discipline, &c.

“19. All the clergy, including the bishops, to be equal, and not to be distinguished by peculiar dress, &c.

“20. The clergy to use or disuse the surplice, gown, &c., as may seem fit.

“21. To be permitted to preach in any place of worship to which they may be invited; and, with consent of churchwardens, to invite any recognized minister of other churches to preach in their pulpits.

“22. In every congregation, persons taking the Bible as the rule of faith, and appearing to be guided by its precepts in their conduct, to be deemed members of the church, and enrolled as such on a church list. Such members to hold subordinate meetings for church discipline.

“23. The liturgy to be revised, and rendered more conformable to scripture.

“24. A general meeting of the clergy for matters of business, to be held annually by rotation in the principal towns of the kingdom.

“25. Churches and burial-grounds to be no longer consecrated: saints' days to be left out of the calendar.

“26. All penal laws, canons, acts of uniformity, and compulsory statutes connected with religion to be repealed.”

Another proposal may be quoted here, which appeared in print a few years since.

“Proposition for a general adjustment of the pecuniary and other questions between the British nation and its established churches.

“1st. That those churches retain all the lands, houses, and personal property now held by them, whether the same consist of estates, glebe lands, bishop's palaces, parsonage-houses, manses, churches or burial-grounds; of money in the funds, or on other securities.

“2nd. That any persons whatever be at liberty to bury their dead in the parochial burial-grounds, in such decent manner, and with such religious rites as they may think proper.

"3rd. That none be compelled to contribute to the remuneration of episcopal, presbyterian, or any other ministers, or to the maintenance of their religious services, or to the repairs of their places of worship.

"4th. That one-half of the ecclesiastical tithe rent-charge be extinguished, as a measure of relief to the agriculturists.

"5th. That the other half be applied to the purposes of general unsectarian education, under the control of a central and of local boards of directors.

"6th. That in consideration of long possession with the sanction of the British legislature, compensation, amounting on an average to the last seven years' net annual proceeds of the ecclesiastical tithe rent-charge, be paid to each of the present incumbents, from the national fund."

The same scheme suggested—

"1st. That the general management and property of the protestant episcopal and presbyterian churches be vested by Parliament in a body of directors, of whom one-half, at least, shall not be ecclesiastical persons; the whole to be elected for ten years by the members of the local churches, in proportion to their number, one-fifth retiring by rotation every two years.

"2nd. That Parliament exercise no further control over the ministers, doctrine, property, or other affairs of those churches, or of any others.

"3rd. That no grants of money be made to any church, or to its ministers as such, either at home or in the colonies.

"4th. That no bishop have a right, by virtue of his office, to sit in the Upper House of Parliament."

No opinion is pronounced here on the particulars of these schemes, nor of others which might be adduced; but while by the legal adoption of some decided measure in a constitutional mode, the bishops and ministers of the British episcopal church would lose a large part of their pecuniary life interests, and the patrons would be deprived of their reversions in trust, with or without compensation, it may be fairly expected that the real necessities of all gospel labourers would be amply provided for by their flocks, and that both the officials of that church and the members generally would gain much in moral and religious discipline, soundness and efficiency. They would be raised from a condition of bondage under the state, to one of independence in

principle and practice. The body might, and most probably would, divide into two or more parts; but each part would be more closely united in itself. They would reform their liturgy and constitution; private zeal would be stimulated to exertion; a spirit of true devotion and piety would be encouraged; a painful incongruity of condition removed; a great measure of national justice accomplished! And it is but reasonable to anticipate such an increase of humility and sincerity amongst episcopalians, and of mutual charity among all denominations, as would advance the interests of true christianity, draw down the divine blessing, and largely promote the spiritual welfare of the nation!

The consequences of an entire separation of any church from the state would be much more beneficial to its own true interests —however unwilling some may be to think so—than to the neighbouring churches not so connected and endowed. The members would feel their responsibility, and obtain the control of their own affairs, of which the civil power now deprives them, as the condition of its protection: they would enjoy a healthy vitality and a freedom of religious thought and action, and thus would be enabled better to fulfil their solemn vocation and high profession as churches of Christ. Mere money and worldly greatness surely are not to be balanced against results, so eminently conducive to the cause of truth and righteousness!

Well will it prove for the Anglican church, for her discipline, for her humility, and her growth in the Divine life—if, renouncing the long-cherished temporalities and dignities of the state, she shall be brought to rely only on her own spontaneous duties and exertions, with the blessing of the Most High! The spirit and tendencies of the age are evidently in this direction, and the ultimate accomplishment must be considered as a question merely of time. To desire that this time may be prolonged, is, in the opinion of the author, no clear evidence of true friendship to that church, or of wise discernment.

With equal inconsistency and boldness, the desire professed by some members of the established church to dissolve the connection with the temporal power, is accompanied with an earnest resolution to retain the “good things of this life,” which are possessed through that connection—to enjoy the emoluments of the state, and yet be independent of its control. The late Sir Robert

Peel once remarked, that "if a church chooses to participate in the advantages appertaining to an establishment, that church, whether it be the church of England, or of Rome, or of Scotland, must conform to the law."

"It is a singular historical coincidence," says an intelligent observer, writing in 1842, "that at the same moment the Catholic clergy in Prussia, the Calvinistic in Scotland, and the Puseyite in England, are all agitating for a church power independent of the state, and using the same arguments. An apostolical succession to power, derived from the headship of Christ over his church, is used by all as a foundation of their claims, and in this the popish clergy seem to have a stronger ground of argument than the others. Theirs is the oldest church after the apostles' days, and any other system set up by the state, and not by the free election and voice of the people, finds a natural prejudice existing against it."¹ The domination of the state over the church is carried to an extreme height in Germany, and has driven many of its purest spirits into exile.

3rd Section.—Existing Infringements on complete Religious Liberty.

While grateful acknowledgment is cheerfully made for the possession of the natural right obtained by all British subjects, of worshipping and serving God in any peaceful mode without personal molestation, it must be remembered that this is only one step, though a highly important one, in the progress of religious liberty; and that many others yet remain to be taken, in order to place the members of the several denominations on that entire equality of standing in all respects, to which, as orderly, conscientious citizens of a free, enlightened and Christian state, they are justly entitled.

The state still remains in close union with one religious body in England, Wales and Ireland, and with another in Scotland; among whose respective bishops, ministers and presbyters, its whole territory is parcelled out, by means of the system of church patronage, as among so many spiritual proprietors and masters, claiming by law religious authority over the entire population; and demanding, as the hire of their ministrations,

¹ Laing's Notes in Germany.

a rent-charge representing one-tenth of the produce of the soil of the kingdom, with other important privileges. All the nation is compelled to pay, not only the rent-charge, but also direct rates for upholding the national places of worship and burial-grounds, now occupied by the favoured religious bodies; as well as for supporting their worship and services. Other charges are also levied on the public for their ministers, varying by custom in different districts. The burial-grounds, though maintained by public rates, are not allowed to be used by the people for sepulture, except with the forms peculiar to these bodies. The British monarch is still their supreme head,—the fountain of their honours and preferments. The bishops are acknowledged and act in the legislature as peers of the realm. The ecclesiastical courts are permitted to exercise special jurisdiction, in matters of conscience, over the whole land. To such ministers alone judgment is confided, with respect to the wills and administrations of all deceased persons. The privileges of most of the universities and public schools of the nation are restricted to the members. The legislation of the state is generally characterised by special provisions in their favour, and is liable at any time to be further exerted in the same direction, as far as public opinion can be brought to submit. Many of these distinctions operate with vastly increased severity in Ireland, where only a small fraction of the population belongs to the privileged body.

Such is a brief statement of the principal grievances of which dissenters still have to complain, being the remnants of those cruel oppressions, which in past ages pressed heavily, and brought imprisonment and death, upon their ancestors; but which, by undaunted, united and persevering efforts, they were enabled thus far successfully to overcome. It must be borne carefully in mind, that these are not mere pecuniary and secular matters, affecting only the purse and the inclination; but necessary consequences of a great hierarchical system, invading the province of conscientious and religious feeling, setting outward law and religious duty often at variance, and presenting a painful choice, whether God or man shall be obeyed.

As members of the great civil and religious community under which we live, the duty is therefore unquestionable, that we endeavour, in the spirit of Christian goodwill, fully to perfect

the work of practical reformation which our predecessors began, until the injurious civil distinctions and privileges confined to such religious bodies are wholly swept away, and all denominations are placed on the same just and equal ground, to worship and serve God according to their own consciences, neither incited to hypocrisy by secular advantages, nor deterred from obedience by outward privations.

Great Britain prides herself on the excellency of her constitution, and on the liberty of the people. But how is that excellency dimmed by the want of equity evinced in her ecclesiastical regulations, by the absence of even-handed justice towards her several churches. And defective is that boasted liberty which acts with compulsion in matters of conscience; constraining it to submit to pecuniary demands equally repugnant to its moral sense, and inconsistent with gospel principles and genuine freedom. When the truth shall make her free, then shall these ancient but servile restrictions be removed, and she and all her sons shall be free indeed !

CHAPTER XXVI.

ESTABLISHMENT AND INFLUENCE OF THE PAPAL POWER IN BRITAIN ; AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

1st Section.—Introduction of the Papal authority.

BEFORE taking a particular view of modern British churches connected with the state, it may be well to survey more closely the old papal stock from which they sprang, and from which many of their institutions and notions have been derived.

Ancient authors are not agreed as to the time when christianity was first introduced into Britain, nor as to those who were the chief agents in planting it. There are strong reasons for believing that the gospel was preached to our heathen ancestors, and embraced by many of them, in the second or third century. In the fifth, the Saxon invaders, being heathens, drove the professors of the faith into remote parts of the country, where they still maintained their Christian worship. About 696 however, Austin (or Augustin), a zealous monk, was sent over with forty others by Pope Gregory, to introduce the Roman Catholic faith into the Saxon kingdoms of Britain. He was kindly received by Ethelbert, King of Kent, whom he soon converted, with other influential persons ; and such was the success attending the exertions of himself and companions, that he is said to have baptized 10,000 converts in one day. The pope appointed him the first Archbishop of Canterbury. Thus encouraged, Austin was earnest to bring the ancient British churches also into a conformity with the Church of Rome. They declined however to acknowledge its authority, and boldly resolved to adhere to their own religious practices. Persecution was set on foot to establish the domination of the pope, and after a long period of conflict, being compelled to yield, they quickly experienced proofs of his desire for absolute rule.

Many of their monarchs, being superstitious and weak-minded persons, submitted to the debasing authority and arbitrary impositions of the haughty pontiff.

For the first 300 years after Christ, no distinction had existed between civil causes and ecclesiastical or spiritual causes; all being determined by the general law, and under the jurisdiction of the magistrates. But after the emperors had embraced christianity, in their zeal to give authority to the bishops, they made them "judges and dividers" over the people, contrary to the example of Christ: granting them jurisdiction by degrees, under various heads, which either were, or were pretended to be, of an ecclesiastical nature. Such were "the cases of tithes, because paid to men of the church; cases of matrimony, because marriages were mostly solemnized in the church; cases testamentary, because wills were often made at the last extremity, when churchmen were present, giving spiritual comfort to the testator;" and so forth. Defamation was a fruitful source of business, and all cases of bad faith were artfully included. The bishops proceeded in these causes according to the civil law, the jurisdictions not being separate in England before the Norman Conquest, all matters being determined in the county or hundred-court, where the bishop and the earl, or other officers on both sides, sat together and administered judgment.¹

The spiritual governors, the bishops, closely followed the civil authorities. Each diocese was divided into deaneries (*decennaries*, or tithings) composed of ten parishes or churches, each of these being under one ecclesiastic or more.² Large properties were gradually acquired by the dean and chapter, or prebendaries, in almost every cathedral. William the Conqueror is stated to have found more than one-third of all the land in the kingdom in the possession of the clergy.³

The pope does not appear to have possessed any civil authority in Britain till the era of the Conquest, when, having favoured the designs of William, he took that opportunity for establishing his own power; and was permitted to do so by the Conqueror, in order to humble the Saxon clergy, and to aggrandize the Norman prelates.

Blackstone remarks, that the most stable foundation of legal and rational government is a due subordination of rank and

¹ Burn's Eccles. Law. ² Ibid.—Deans. ³ Ibid.—Monasteries.

a gradual scale of authority.¹ Tyranny also is most firmly supported by a regular increase of despotism, rising from the slave to the sultan. The difference however is, that the measure of obedience in the one is grounded on the consent of the people, and the just and necessary principles of society; while in the other it is limited only by absolute will and pleasure, without permission to the inferior to examine the title upon which it is built. More effectually therefore to enclose the consciences and minds of the people, the Romish clergy themselves paid the most implicit obedience to their own superiors or prelates; and they in turn were as blindly devoted to the will of the sovereign pontiff, whose decisions they held to be infallible, and his authority co-extensive with the world!

The establishment of the feudal system, by which the lands of private proprietors were declared to be held of the prince, furnished a hint to the court of Rome, for usurping a similar authority over all the preferments of the church. The pope became a feudal lord, and all ordinary patrons were to hold their right of patronage under this universal superior. Estates held by feudal tenure, being originally gratuitous donations, or at least so esteemed, were at that time denominated *beneficia*. The name and constitution of these were borrowed, and the care of the souls of a parish thence came to be termed an ecclesiastical benefice. Lay-fees or lands being conferred by investiture or delivery of possession, spiritual benefices also received an investiture from the bishop, and induction under his authority; as lands lapsed to the lord in defect of a legal tenant, so benefices lapsed to the bishop upon non-presentation by the patron; and other fines were extorted from the clergy by the bishops and the pope, similar to those levied by princes on their vassals.

At length the pope went a step beyond the example of any secular ruler, and reserved to himself, as stated in a former chapter, the absolute disposal of bishoprics and benefices! King John having refused to sanction the pope's nomination of Langton to the see of Canterbury; the pontiff on this account, in 1208, laid the whole kingdom under interdict for six years, during which period the churches were sealed up, the religious rites, on which the salvation of souls was then supposed to depend, were intermitted, marriage could not be

¹ Commentaries, book iv. chap. 8.

legally accomplished, and the bodies of the dead, denied interment in consecrated ground, were thrown into ditches and wastes, or buried in silence!¹

To sum up this head with a transaction almost unequalled even in those days, Innocent III. had at length the effrontery to demand, and King John had the meanness to yield, a resignation of his crown to the pontiff, whereby England was pretended to become for ever "St. Peter's patrimony;" the abject monarch thus becoming reconciled to the pope and his dignitaries, whom he had offended, and receiving back his sceptre from the hands of the papal legate, to hold as the vassal of the see of Rome, at the annual rent of a thousand marks, or £666. 6s. 8d!²

Innocent III. directed his attention to four main points: 1st, to establish the secular power of the papacy in the Roman states, and to enlarge their boundaries. 2nd. To fix the pre-eminence of the papal over the royal authority throughout the kingdoms of western Europe, and to reduce their sovereigns to the condition of vassals to himself. 3rd. To enlarge the pontifical authority and influence within the church. And 4th, to secure the unity of the faith by the extirpation of heresy.³ All these he unscrupulously attempted to carry out. He enforced the payment of tithes, and laid an impost on ecclesiastical property, called *the Saladin tax*, for the pretended service of religion, by the slaughter of Saracens and heretic Christians. He appears to have been the most able and ambitious pope after Gregory VII.

2nd Section.—Extent of Papal Exactions.

Some authors assert that the papal dominion in Europe reached its height in the beginning of the thirteenth century; and that, after the proud pontificate of Innocent III., when

¹ Fox's *Acts and Mon.* vol. i.; Brook's *Civil and Religious Liberty*, vol. i.

² "With respect to John's surrender of his kingdom to the pope, it must in justice be observed that his nobles assented to it, and never made it a ground of reproach to him. His father had done the same, so also had the King of Arragon and the Norman monarchs of Naples and Sicily; and Richard I. had declared himself a vassal of the empire. Such vassalage was no dishonour in those days, even to the highest.—Keightley's *History of England*.

³ Waddington's *History*.

parochial tithes were generally established, the papacy began to decline. Others allege that it did not obtain its full force till the time of Boniface VIII., a hundred years later.

Though the title of spiritual head of the universal church was a thing of great sound, and of greater authority among men of conscience and piety; yet the court of Rome was fully aware that, among the bulk of mankind, power cannot be maintained or enjoyed without property; and therefore its attention was very early turned to every method that promised pecuniary advantage. Tithes, Peter's pence, &c., had already been established. The doctrine of purgatory was introduced, and the purchase of masses was urged, to redeem out of it the souls of the deceased. New offices were created, and indulgences sold to the wealthy for liberty to sin. The canon law took cognizance of crimes, enjoined penance for the salvation of the soul, and commuted that penance and all religious duties for money. Non-residence and pluralities among the clergy, and marriages among the laity related within the seventh degree, were strictly prohibited by canon; but dispensations or exemptions in these and other matters were seldom denied, to those who could afford to buy them. Thus the pope determined at will the legitimacy of children, the rights of families, and the connubial privileges of the people, and was to be influenced only by interest or money. In short, the wealth of Britain, as well as of other countries, was largely drained by a thousand channels into the coffers of the see of Rome, and its local representatives. In no country were these pecuniary exactions and encroachments carried to a more exorbitant pitch than in Britain, which became one great field of ecclesiastical imposition and plunder.

In 1245, it was solemnly stated to the Council of Lyons, that Italian priests drew annually from England 60,000 or 70,000 marks, being about £45,000.—a sum at that time greater than the whole revenue of the crown. The appointments to parochial benefices were openly seized, and foreign priests were placed in the richest. Most of these continued to reside in Italy, where they held other preferments; many never visited England, nor understood the language: and it is affirmed that in some cases as many as fifty or sixty livings were accumulated on one individual. The king, prelates and barons complained to the court of Rome that many of these foreigners,

who occupied the benefices and received the tithes, did not even provide substitutes to perform the services.¹

A parliamentary remonstrance stated, in 1376, that the yearly taxes paid to the pope out of England were five times the amount paid to the king; also that the richest prince in Christendom had not the fourth part of that revenue. The ecclesiastics and their lands were mostly exempted from general taxation, and from other contributions to the service of the state. Very nearly one-half of the soil of England was at this period in the possession of the church; whose total income was computed by Knyghton to amount to the enormous sum of 730,000 marks, or nearly £500,000. in money of those days, and at least five times as much at the present time. A moiety of the land in Scotland is said to have been also in the hands of the ecclesiastics. While the church thus became rich, the poverty of the state and of secular individuals was proportionately extreme:² the one may be said to have eaten up the others. The principle of most of these ecclesiastical imposts was continued through the changes of the Reformation, and their remains may yet be traced down to the present day. An outline of the steps, by which these mis-called spiritual claims were gradually introduced and established, seemed necessary to give a clearer view of the origin of certain demands and usages still subsisting.

3rd Section.—Chief Heads of the Revenue drawn from England by the Popes.

The following are mentioned by Fuller and others, as the chief modes by which the papal revenue was collected:—

1st. The sale of vast numbers of the “*Agnus Dei*,” holy trinkets, consecrated beads, crucifixes, medals, &c., said to act as charms or preservers. These were the privilege of the subordinate officers.

2nd. The annates or first-fruits, being the entire revenue of one year, which every new bishop or priest paid to the pope. The bishops were charged various sums under this head, from £4000. downwards.

¹ Blackstone's Commentaries, Waddington, &c.

² “In a few years Gregory IX. is said, partly by levies of money, partly by revenues of benefices, to have plundered the kingdom of 950,000 marks.” —*Hallam's Middle Ages*, vol. ii.

3rd. The appeals in all high controversies, in which the pope reserved to himself the definitive sentence, and hence derived no small profit.

4th. The pension given him by King Ethelwolf in 856, while on a pilgrimage to Rome. This king had established tithes before; he now added a pension of 300 marks or £100. a year, chiefly, as is said, to provide "candles for St. Peter and St. Paul."¹

5th. Dispensations were another profitable source of revenue, being licences from the pope for various acts which were usually forbidden; such as marriages in certain months, or within certain degrees of kindred, the succession of illegitimate sons, &c. Many of these acts he had forbidden without scriptural authority, in order to increase his own.

6th. Indulgences extended to more direct moral transgressions and produced a large return. According to the doctrine of supererogation in the Romish church, all the good works of the saints, over and above those necessary towards their own justification, are deposited, together with the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, in one inexhaustible treasury! The keys of this were committed to St. Peter, and to his successors the popes, who may open it at pleasure, and by transferring a portion of this superabundant merit to any particular person for a sum of money, may convey to him, either the pardon of his own sins, or a release for any one in whose happiness he is interested, from the pains of purgatory! Such indulgences, which were, in fact, anticipated absolutions, and tended greatly to relax the discipline of the church and the public morals, were first invented in the eleventh century, as a recompence for the crusaders, and instead of shocking mankind, they soon became general.² Plenary indulgence implied an unconditional permission to sin for the rest of life!

7th. Legative levies were made occasionally, as the necessities or desires of the papal see prompted.

8th. Mortuaries were considered due to the pontiff at the death of great prelates.

9th. Pardons were purchased for sums of money in extraordinary cases.

10th. Peter's pence, or Rome-scot. Ina, king of the West

¹ William of Malmesbury. ² Robertson's Charles V.

Saxons, going on a pilgrimage to Rome about 740, was induced to enter into an absurd agreement with Gregory II., that every family or every chimney in his dominions should pay a penny a year to the pope, at the time called "the feast of St. Peter:" from whence the tribute was termed Peter's pence.¹ Offa, king of Mercia, who also imposed tithes on his subjects, having committed a murder, and seeking for absolution, laid a similar impost on his own country about fifty years after. These levies were gradually extended to the whole of England, and continued to be generally paid, with some commutations and interruptions, for 800 years, till the time of the Reformation, when Henry VIII. enacted that for the future no person should pay this or any other imposition to the see of Rome. The annual amount varied much; Fuller calculates it at £7,500.²

11th. Pilgrimages were another source of income; superstitious persons of quality going yearly to Rome, sometimes with bare feet, but never with empty hands. The pope's principal harvest from this device was in the jubilee, when multitudes of English and other strangers flocked to the city: one million are said to have arrived in the year 1300, on the first occasion, and to have suffered dreadfully from want!

12th. Tenthys, being a tenth part of the annual profit of each living, according to a general valuation, were claimed by the pope, on the example of Melchizedec and the high-priests of the Jews. Collectors were stationed in each diocese, who forwarded the amount every year.³

From these multifarious sources, traces of many of which still remain in most countries of Europe, vast sums of money flowed annually to the treasury of the Romish see; independently of the revenues of the parochial priests, the monks, &c.

The "hundred grievances," as stated in a memorial to the diet of Nuremberg in 1523, was a catalogue of hereditary wrongs, the subjects of repeated but fruitless remonstrances. "Payments for dispensations and absolutions, sums of money drawn by indulgences, appeals to Rome, reservations, commendams, annates, exemption of ecclesiastics from legal punishment, excommunications and unlawful interdicts, secular causes

¹ See chapter xiv., sect. 3.

² Fuller's Hist. cent. 16.

* Fuller's Hist. book ii.

tried before clerical tribunals, great expenses in consecrating churches and cemeteries, pecuniary penance, fees for sacraments, burials, &c., &c.” Each of these heads would unfold in detail a long chapter of priestly avarice and oppression.¹

4th Section.—Ecclesiastical or Canon Law.

From the period of Constantine, the injunctions or canons of the various councils held for the government of the church were deemed to be of great authority. They were collected into three volumes by Ivo, Bishop of Chartres in France, about the year 1100, and were called “the Decrees.” About thirty years after, was discovered in Italy the original manuscript of “the pandects of Justinian,” containing a collection of the civil laws of the Romans. From that time, the study of the Roman jurisprudence received great attention in different parts of Europe, and the civil and canon law formed an important branch of academical learning. Gratian, a Benedictine monk of Bologna, stimulated by the discovery, and following that work as a model, collected the canonical writings about the same period, and prepared an abridgment, termed “the Decretals,” from the decrees of general councils, the decretal letters and bulls of popes, and the opinions of ancient doctors. The work was designed by him to bring together and harmonize the discordant canons; its main object being to strengthen and extend the authority of the papal see; but it is said to be full of defects and errors. Innocent IV. forbade even the reading of the municipal law by the clergy, because it was not founded on the imperial or clerical constitutions, but merely on the customs of the laity.² Andreas, an eminent canonist of the fourteenth century, wrote a commentary on the Decretals, and entitled it “Novellæ,” after a favourite daughter. This work, often termed his “Novels,” acquired a high reputation and authority in popish countries.

The extension of the canon law, and its reduction to a regular system, on the principle of ecclesiastical superiority and independence, greatly strengthened the court of Rome and the church in their conflict with the civil powers.³ “Boniface VIII.,” says Gavazzi, “abrogated by one fell swoop the authority of kings, of magistrates, and of fathers, involving the human race

¹ Waddington’s Hist. ² Blackstone’s Introd. ³ Buck’s Theolog. Dict.

in sacerdotal servitude. Legislation quailed before the new-born code of clerical command, which, in the slang of the dark ages, had obtained the name of canon law! Its false principle was, that every human right, claim, property, franchise or feeling, at variance with the predominance of the popedom, was inimical to heaven! The pandects and codes of Justinian were set aside by clerical bye-laws; and the famous Clementine code, introduced in the eighth century, but well known to be a forgery, superseded the jurisdiction of civil tribunals, and forbade the holding of national councils without the sanction of the pope. The clergy, claiming exemption from the ordinary jurisdiction of the land, ran riot in the impunity of concealed delinquency—all under the sanction of canon law.¹¹

The first volume of the *Decretals* was regularly studied in the universities and schools of England, and was admitted as law in the ecclesiastical courts. King Stephen, in whose reign it was introduced, viewed the canon law which it contained with great aversion, and issued a proclamation against the study of it. This was treated as an act of impiety by the ecclesiastics, and from that time two opposing parties prevailed. On the one hand, the bishops and clergy, many of them foreigners, adhering to the papal authority, upheld the civil and canon laws, which were generally united; and on the other hand, the nobility and laity adhered to the ancient common law of England. The papal see assumed the authority of dispensing with the strongest moral and civil obligations, and with oaths disadvantageous to the church—a very comprehensive and convenient phrase! The contests between the two jurisdictions were violent, and carried on with obstinacy on both sides.

A striking instance of the opposition between these parties, and of the low morals of the ecclesiastics, was exhibited, in the reign of Henry III., at the famous parliament of Merton in 1236; when the prelates endeavoured to procure an act to declare all base children legitimate, provided the parents inter-married at any time afterwards; alleging that "holy church," or in other words canon law, declared the legitimacy of such offspring! To this "all the earls and barons answered, with one voice, that they would not change the laws of England, which

¹ Sixth Lecture.

had hitherto been used and approved!"¹ A memorable decision against priestcraft; would that it had always been pronounced with equal firmness!

The same firmness prevailed in the next century, when the nobility declared "that the realm of England hath never been unto this hour, neither, by the consent of our lord the king and the lords of parliament, shall it ever be, ruled or governed by the civil or canon law." In the "spiritual courts" however, the proceedings are to the present time conducted in part according to that code, in consequence of these courts having first been established under the immediate direction of the popish ecclesiastics.

One great evil which followed from the establishment of such courts, and the acknowledgment of this law, was that the self-styled clergy, who had committed crimes however great, claimed immunity from the judgment of secular tribunals, or what was termed "the benefit of clergy," and were held responsible to the ecclesiastical authorities alone. By these means, their many immoralities being connived at by one another and by their superiors, they generally escaped punishment altogether, to the great scandal of their religious profession.

Strong in their usurped authority, and acting under the monstrous sanction of the canon law, the popes had two dreaded weapons to hurl against those who offended them,—excommunication and interdict.

Excommunication was originally nothing more than the power which every religious society possesses, or ought to possess, of expelling or removing its faulty members. But the papacy converted it into an engine of terrific vengeance. "The excommunicate was cursed with a fiendish minuteness of detail, in soul and body, life and limb, person and estate, temporals and spirituals." Interdict was a superior and a more comprehensive punishment; being pronounced against the territories, the subjects, and the persons of such sovereigns or nobles as had offended the head of the church. When the dominions of a prince were laid under interdict, all religious offices were forbidden to the inhabitants. "No service was performed in the churches; their doors were sealed up; no bells were rung or even tolled, a

¹ "Una voce responderunt quod nolunt leges Anglias mutare."—*Stat. Merton, 20 Hen. III. c. 9.—Blackstone's Commentaries; Introduction.*

matter then of great moment; and, what was still greater, no sacraments were administered, save baptism and extreme unction; the dead were buried in silence, and in waste places; a moral gloom overspread the land!"

Gregory VII., or Hildebrand, was the first who used these spiritual weapons against emperors and kings.¹ During a long and dark period they were generally successful, in bringing both monarchs and people to speedy submission. Down to the time of Boniface VIII., the dreaded bulls of the Vatican and the terrible sentence of interdict were often issued against different countries, to the dismay of all their inhabitants! But as light increased, these priestly fulminations were set at naught, and the terrors of canon law were disregarded and despised.

The sovereigns too were not without their means of defence and retaliation. By outlawry, and by seizing the property and sometimes the persons of troublesome and obstinate ecclesiastics, they managed to keep the pope and his dependents in check, and to vindicate their own interests.

One of the last feeble attempts of papal vengeance against the sovereigns of England was exhibited in the bull of Pope Pius V., issued in 1570 against Queen Elizabeth, and beginning in the old lofty style of "*Regnans in excelsis, &c.*" This bull denounced "the pretended Queen of England" as "illegitimate and excommunicate," deprived her of all title to the throne, and absolved her subjects from their allegiance, forbidding them, under pain of excommunication, to obey her. It was treated with contemptuous hostility, and, in conformity with the barbarous, revengeful spirit of the age, the agent who distributed it was put to death!²

5th Section.—Religious Houses, as Abbeys, Monasteries, &c.

Another powerful engine of ecclesiastical usurpation was the introduction of religious houses, or establishments of monks and friars. These, not content with the ample provision of tithes, given by law to the parochial ministers and largely shared by themselves, as well as with generous voluntary contributions, endeavoured, by ingratiating themselves into the favour of the sick and dying, to obtain possession of manors and estates, and

¹ Keightley's History of England.

² Ibid.

thus wrested the property from the lawful heirs. Pretending extraordinary sanctity and spiritual power, they fascinated the minds of the people, obtained, for purposes professedly religious, large grants of money and land, and artfully propagated the notion, that to deprive them of these was nothing less than sacrilege.

"A death-bed was a friar's harvest. Then were suggested the foundation of chantries, and the provision for masses and wax-lights. The confessional was his exchequer; there hints were dropped to sensitive ears, that the convent needed a new window, or owed £40 for stones." Rival relics also were set up, and impostures of various kinds multiplied, to the impoverishment of the people, and to the disgrace of the so-called church.¹

"How vast," says Achilli, speaking of Italy at a very recent date, "is the speculation of these gentry! In this line of business, the jesuits, the friars, &c., despoil houses, impoverish families, and often turn mothers and children out of doors, destitute and forlorn! These are the notorious results of the practice of confession, and sufficient to pain every reflecting heart."² Such was the state of things formerly in Britain! May there be sufficient thankfulness for the light and liberty obtained!

The religious orders having establishments in England in the times of popery were very numerous.³

Eight orders of monks had about 200 large houses.

| | | |
|---------------------------------|-----|---|
| Eight sorts of canons | 250 | " |
|---------------------------------|-----|---|

| | | |
|--|----|---|
| Three other sorts of nuns, say | 35 | " |
|--|----|---|

| | | |
|----------------------------------|-----|---|
| Eleven kinds of friars | 190 | " |
|----------------------------------|-----|---|

| | | |
|---|----|---|
| Three military orders of the religious, say | 25 | " |
|---|----|---|

| | | |
|--------------------------|-----|---------------|
| Together about | 700 | large houses. |
|--------------------------|-----|---------------|

Beside these, the number of small establishments then scattered through the country is almost incredible; so that the whole amounted to about 3182 religious houses, containing, as is computed, 50,000 persons. This is the total number of the institutions supposed to have been dissolved from first to last, in addition to the friars' houses, &c. Like a swarm of locusts, they devoured the fruits of the land.

¹ Blunt's Reformation in England. ² Dealings with the Inquisition.

³ Burn's Ecclesiastical Law.

Seated in cathedrals, collegiate churches or colleges, abbeys, priories, preceptories, commandries, hospitals, friaries, hermitages, chantries, free chapels, and nunneries, they afforded, in their dress, pursuits and habits of life, a singular contrast to those of the present age.

Their total yearly revenues at the times of dissolution were returned as follows :—

| | |
|--|----------|
| Of the greater monasteries | £104,920 |
| Lesser ditto | 29,702 |
| Knights hospitallers in London | 2,386 |
| Ditto in the country | 3,026 |
| Friars' houses | 751 |
| | £140,785 |

These ecclesiastics had accumulated such large possessions, through their influence over the dying, when called to receive their confessions and to give absolution, that nearly one-third of the soil of all England is said to have come into their hands. And though many were their hospitalities to the poor and strangers, yet in the main they consumed within their own walls, in luxury and licentiousness, the streams of plenty which should have fertilized the whole country. To check these rapacious proceedings, Edward I., "the English Justinian," and other sovereigns, enacted the statutes of *Mortmain*, by which persons were restrained from alienating their property with the "*dying hand*," or into a "*dead hand*."

The evils of the system became at length too flagrant to be overlooked or tolerated. The Templars were dissolved as early as 1312. Foreign monks having obtained possession of many priories, by bequest of parties who had travelled abroad, and by other means, the spirit of the nation was roused against them, and they were suppressed about 1418. Their lands and other property were confiscated to the crown,¹ and eight new colleges were established at Oxford and Cambridge. Even the pope found it expedient to manifest his disapprobation of the conduct of some of the professedly religious; and in 1528 he issued two bulls, directing Cardinal Wolsey to suppress several monasteries, whose evil character had become notorious. This however was a very

¹ Blackstone's Commentaries, 4—8.

insufficient measure. Henry VIII. proceeded farther, and in 1535 appointed a special commission to visit all the religious houses, and to inquire into their morals, revenues and general state. The report disclosed the existence of scandalous immoralities and impostures; and the king, nothing loath to act upon it, suppressed in the following year about 380 of the smaller establishments. Within five years, most of the larger ones and the Knights of Jerusalem were put down. Still more sweeping was the last act of Henry in this direction a few years later, so that it included even the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, Winchester and Eton; these however were spared, on their petitioning for mercy. In the first year of Edward VI., many other religious houses were dissolved.

The total number and the computed revenues have been already stated, as given by Burn. Other authors represent the several dissolutions to have embraced 645 monasteries, 90 colleges, 110 hospitals, with 2374 chantries or free chapels; and their income to have been much larger. The furniture, plate and other moveables were very valuable. A late writer¹ says,—but his estimate must be a high one,—that “thirty millions and a half was the amount of the whole booty, on which Henry boldly laid his hand, sweeping it all into his capacious crypt; giving back just what he pleased, and making even that subject to the payment of his first-fruits and tenths. The gold and jewellery alone were estimated at a million. All which,” he says, “may be seen at large in the Cotton MSS., in *Strype's Ecclesiastical Memorials, Spelman's History of Sacrilege, Speed, Stowe and Camden.*” Collier gives it as his opinion that, though the revenues of the monks nominally amounted to a fifth of the whole returns of the kingdom, they did not actually exceed a tenth. This however was a handsome share, in addition to the incomes of the parochial ministers, or “secular clergy,” which were doubtless of equal or greater value.

The vast property, of which the king obtained the disposal by the dissolution of these houses, consisted chiefly of tithes and lands. He had promised to apply the whole for religious objects, but failed in the performance. Queen Mary had a design to restore the property to the ecclesiastics, and actually

¹ Howitt's *Priestcraft*, p. 336.

obtained a bull from the pope for that purpose, but was prevented from executing it by the barons and others, who had no inclination to surrender their share of the spoil, and were too strong to be compelled to yield.

The remarks of Bishop Burnet on the monasteries and their dissolution are worthy of note. “As the pope got to himself a great principality, so his clergy imitated him as much as possible, sparing no pains, nor thinking any methods too bad to promote their projects. The belief of purgatory, and the redeeming of souls out of it by masses, with many other like impostures, had brought the wealth of this and many other nations into their hands. It was therefore a reasonable and just proceeding of the government, to resume those lands which had been fraudulently drawn from former ages, and to dispose of them otherwise for the interest of the whole kingdom.” Well, however, would it have been for the nation, if the disposal of them had been as free from objection, and the application as comprehensive as are here presumed. A noble fund might thus have been created, for educational and other generally beneficial purposes of an unsectarian character!

It must be acknowledged that many of these establishments had been highly useful in encouraging literature, and relieving the necessitous: but their tendency was to engross religion and learning, such as these were, to themselves, instead of diffusing their blessings through society at large. The system was unsound in principle and deeply pernicious in its main effects; idleness and gross immorality having deeply insinuated themselves. Yet the destitution which many of the inmates suffered, in consequence of the hasty overthrow of their asylums, was extreme; many thousands being suddenly deprived of the means of subsistence, and driven out, either to perish through want, to implore employment or charity, or to perpetrate acts of desperate criminality. Some obtained small pensions, others “forty shillings each and a new gown,” till they procured livings; but the larger part were wholly unprovided for. And the neighbouring poor, deprived of their accustomed refuge and relief, also suffered grievously from the change. A distinct state-provision for them, and severe laws against vagrancy, soon became necessary.

An eminent writer observes that, if the superstitious zeal

which established these monastic foundations had continued to prevail, England would probably have been by this time a nation of monks and friars.¹ Warm gratitude is due to the gracious watchful Providence, which preserved her for brighter and higher purposes. Is there any danger that, through the prevalence of a latitudinarian indifference, these orders, and still more the Jesuits, may again obtain an influence in Britain? Too many Romish priests, it is feared, are mere ecclesiastical craftsmen, conscious of the fearful impositions which they practise, and reckless of the inevitable results in superstition or infidelity. Protestants, while they steadily uphold liberty of conscience for all, have need of an especial guard against encouraging such errors.²

¹ Burn's Ecclesiastical Law.

² The careless and capricious manner in which Henry VIII. disposed of the property of the religious houses, is strikingly exhibited in the case of the "Priory of St. Germans, in Cornwall," as related by an old historian. A certain John Champernowne, it appears, followed the court, and, through his pleasantries, won the favour of the king. "Now when the golden shower of the dissolved abbey lands rained well near into every gaper's mouth," two or three gentlemen, acquaintances of Champernowne, waited at a door to see the king, and to beg the favour of a grant of church property. Champernowne being inquisitive to know their suit, they declined to tell him. In the mean time the king came out; they knelt down, so did Champernowne; they preferred their petition, which the king granted; they returned humble thanks; so did he. Afterwards they refused to allow him a share; but the king, on Champernowne's appeal, declared that he meant to bestow the largess equally. On this the overreached companions were obliged to allot him this priory as his share of the whole grant.* The property thus accidentally and ingeniously acquired proved very valuable. It was returned at £240. a year at the dissolution; and the prior and six canons had pensions of £75. allotted to them.—See Dugdale's *Monast. Angl.*

* Carew's Survey of Cornwall.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE ANGLICAN STATE CHURCH ; ITS INTERNAL GOVERNMENT,
ITS COURTS AND OFFICERS.

1st Section.—General Observations.

WHEN a church claims the support of the public, and demands that support as its due, the public have a natural right to inquire into the nature of the institution which they are thus compelled to maintain. On this ground the present inquiry will be pursued, with Christian plainness, but without hostility.

The secular power which the British Episcopal Church possesses, is vested not in itself, as a religious corporation, but in the state of which its members constitute an important part. Even its disciplinary authority rests, to a large extent, with the imperial parliament. The state indeed performs the functions which a well proportioned share of internal lay authority ought to fulfil. So learned, influential and wealthy a body might be supposed to be fully capable of regulating all its own business, and providing for itself ; but like a pampered and overfed animal long confined with a short golden chain, it possesses but little healthy energy or self-control, and is obliged to depend on artificial means and extraneous aid, to direct its movements, and to supply its wants. Not allowed to move, nor to create any general working agency of its own, and possessing scarcely any but its bishops and ministers, it wants the bone and muscle of vigorous health, and the place of these necessary stamina has to be filled by the state, its master ; which endeavours to make good the absence of the deliberations and measures of the church at large, by the discussions and acts of the national legislature. This body, though composed of persons of very different religious persuasions, and even, it may be, of others of

no religion at all, employs its authority to determine the ritual of the state-church, and to regulate its revenues and discipline, such as the latter is,—while the monarch, its supreme head on earth, acting like the prelates in both capacities, is the dispenser of most of its preferments and dignities, appointing its archbishops, bishops, and many of its ministers.

That a Christian spiritual church should be united to any political state and governed by it, may well be objected to, on grounds of Scripture and reason. It is however matter of especial objection, that any religious body should be found in so anomalous and painful a position, as that of union with and dependence on a secular government and parliament, composed of men of all shades of religious opinion and profession. This condition of things can only be attributed to the fact, that in the younger days of the state and of its church, the religion of the one was the religion of the other ; and that, whatever differences of faith really existed, there was but one professed church in the nation. With this general unity in belief and profession, the state was in fact the visible church ; the head of the one was the head of the other ; the legislature was mainly the same for both ; the people were members of both ; all were expected to contribute in person and in purse to the support of both ; and what each needed, or thought it needed, the other endeavoured to supply. The difference was mainly as to their functions ; the one class being political and temporal, the other religious and spiritual.

But in process of time, differences of opinion arose with respect to religion, and the spread of these differences produced dissenting churches. Still these were only a small minority, and the members of the former general church refused to abate their own authority and privileges, treating the others as schismatics. At length one of the reputed schismatic bodies prevailed so much in numbers and authority, as to seize the power of the state and of the ruling church, and apply that power to its own purposes. After several changes of this sort, a religious community, styled heretical by the early state-church, now retains the authority over the original possessor, and over the rest.

During the same time, great changes have also taken place in the government of the state. One religious and political party

has been in power at one period, and another at another period. Formerly the governing body was composed of men who united with one another and with the state-church, on religious matters; now it is composed of persons distinguished by every variety of opinion and every discordance of profession. And yet, with such a divided body of legislators, one church continues to retain the ancient connection, claiming for itself the authority and privileges which were formerly possessed by the general and sole church of the nation, and subject to the control and dictation of the heterogeneous legislative body. The evils of this state of things, in whatever country, and especially in Britain, it is a chief object of the present volume to expose.

2nd Section.—Brief Historical Sketch of the Exercise of Ecclesiastical Supremacy by successive Rulers of the State.

A rapid glance at some chief features in the conduct of the various Protestant rulers of the state, with respect to matters of religion, may not ill employ a few pages; since a striking practical illustration is afforded by it of the mischievous effects of the power and interference of civil governors in the control of such matters, and of the danger of entrusting them with such a power.

The Reformation quickly put a stop to the papal authority in England, and to the enormous drains of money to Rome, related in the last chapter; while appeals to the pope, which had been practised from the reign of Stephen, were also prohibited. Henry VIII. however transferred to himself, as the pope's successor, as much as he could of authority and wealth; remaining a papist and a persecutor to the last. Priestly power and tithes were perpetuated; and the church, though curbed in some of its extravagant pretensions, continued united with the state as firmly as ever, and even more dependent upon it.

It is always more easy to pull down error than to build up simple truth; but both processes require a large portion of charity and singleness of purpose. Without this, the faith which can remove mountains, and the knowledge of all mysteries are nothing. Many of the gross superstitions and false doctrines of popery had been swept away, not always in the spirit of the gospel; but other errors and ill founded notions,

built upon them and but little different, were retained ; and great as was the work effected, it was rather a compromise between conflicting opinions, than a complete reformation. Protestant episcopacy was set up instead of Catholic episcopacy, and the head of the new church required implicit obedience, no less than the head of the former. There was a change of ecclesiastical masters, not an abolition of spiritual mastery. A thorough reformation would have abolished all state interference and connexion, and consequently all persecutions for religion. These however followed through the reigns of Henry VIII., Mary and Elizabeth ; the flames being turned in different directions, just as different doctrines influenced the royal authority.

One of the first examples of Henry's care over the spiritual interests of his subjects is found in an act, passed at his special suggestion in 1539, four years after the renunciation of popery, "for abolishing diversity of opinions in certain articles concerning Christian religion," and commonly called "The law of the Six Articles." These were in substance as follows :— "1st. That in the sacrament, after consecration, there remained no substance of bread and wine ; but, under these forms, the natural body and blood of Christ. 2nd. That communion in both kinds (that is, with the wine as well as the bread,) was not necessary. 3rd. That priests might not marry. 4th. That vows of chastity ought to be observed. 5th. That private masses should be continued. 6th. That auricular confession was requisite." Under these heads were retained some of the worst features of popery !

All persons speaking, preaching, or writing against the first article, were to be judged heretics and burnt. Imprisonment, forfeiture of goods, and punishment as felons, were decreed against those who did not conform to the other articles, or who spoke against them. Commissioners were sent round to detect delinquents, and all ecclesiastical incumbents were to read the act publicly once a quarter. On the ground of this "severe and barbarous statute,"—the work of a monarch, who was in some respects a reformer—not less than 500 persons were soon sent to prison, and many were burned as heretics. In 1540, it was decreed that the ordinances of the king alone, on matters of religion, should have all the force of law. Thus were evil

passions and evil instruments largely mingled in the great work of professed reformation.

Edward VI. repealed the law of the six articles ; at the same time he enforced with severe penalties the new liturgy and ceremonies, stripped of some of their popish character ; the work being attributed to "the aid of the Holy Ghost."

Queen Mary carried into practice, as far as in her lay, the principle which the leaders of every religious party still taught,—that erroneous doctrine ought to be extirpated. Many enlightened Christians sealed their testimony with their blood. Those opinions, which had been held up as orthodox in the last reign, were now punished as heretical,—a dreadful result of one single fact—that an individual of different opinions had become the supreme head of the state ; the nation generally remaining the same, and being divided into two great parties.

Queen Elizabeth soon showed herself determined to maintain an absolute ecclesiastical supremacy : and the changes which she made, after her first assertion of protestantism, were rather retrograde towards popery than otherwise. The liturgy of Edward VI. was revised, and rendered more agreeable to the papists. Even to bishops of her own church, her love of outward pomp in religion, and the imperious dictation in which she indulged, proved causes of continued pain and irritation. In language almost profane, she is said to have threatened to "unfrock," or displace some of them, when they showed a disposition to judge for themselves. To her determined resistance of further reforms through a long reign, may be attributed, in great measure, the imperfect character of the English Reformation.

To secure unity of opinion among the protestants she deemed essential to the peace and security of the state ; and with these views the Act of Uniformity was passed in 1559, establishing the new forms and services, and requiring all the Queen's subjects to attend them, under penalty of fine and imprisonment. By one of its clauses, she was empowered to make whatever alterations she might think proper,—a liberty which she used rather in favour of popery.

Many of the most zealous English protestants, to escape death and imprisonment in the reign of Queen Mary, had fled for safety to the continent of Europe. Their principal settlement was at Frankfort, where they were permitted in 1554 to

establish a little church ; but scarcely had they done so, when differences of opinion arose among them, chiefly with respect to the liturgy, and observances in divine worship ; and separate churches were the consequence. On returning to England after the death of Mary, they brought these different sentiments with them.¹

Many were altogether dissatisfied with the popish corruptions still retained, and claimed a liberty of conscience to worship God with greater *purity* than they thought the Act of Uniformity prescribed ; hence they received in contempt the name of *Puritans*. They considered that the queen, as well as her predecessors, in exacting rigid conformity to their own views by penal statutes, had forsaken the great protestant principles of the divine authority and sufficiency of the holy scriptures, and of the right of individual conscience to judge in matters of religion ; and that the stringent Act of Uniformity was entirely at variance with these great principles, by demanding obedience on points in which there ought to be freedom, and inflicting penalties in cases where there was no crime. Between the queen and the puritans wide diversity of sentiment arose, and the authority in church and state being in her hands, with a parliament obsequious to her will, one oppressive penal enactment followed another in quick succession. Many nonconformist ministers were consigned to prisons, where they languished in great suffering, and more than a few died. No hope of accommodation between the two parties now remained, and the high church and the puritans loaded one another with reproaches. Satirical pamphlets, such as *Martin-mar-prelate*, were printed by an itinerant press, and in reply, *Pasquil's Apology* and others, ill becoming the gravity and meekness of advocates of religion.² Elizabeth often declared that she hated the puritans still more than the papists ; and by her religious intolerance and personal jealousies, she sullied the high reputation of her sovereignty over the state.

At length, about the year 1570, twelve years having elapsed since the last rejection of popery, the puritan ministers and people who were most dissatisfied, seeing no hope of redress to their grievances, determined to renounce their communion with the established church, and made an open separation ; some

¹ Neal's Puritans.

² Ibid.

receiving the name of Brownists, some of Presbyterians, and others of Baptists.

Among the oppressive Acts, was one passed in 1592, "for the punishment of persons obstinately refusing to come to church," and attending "any conventicle or meeting under pretence of religion." After three months' disobedience, they were to be sent into perpetual banishment, and in case of returning without licence, were to suffer death. Many puritans took refuge in Holland, where they enjoyed liberty of conscience; and not fewer than seventy popish priests were banished at one time. Camden admits that *fifty* were executed within ten months. Two hundred catholics appear to have suffered death in Elizabeth's reign as traitors, pretended or real!¹

An oath, acknowledging the queen's spiritual supremacy, was imposed by statute; the Court of High Commission was established, which exercised arbitrary jurisdiction chiefly in ecclesiastical matters; and the star-chamber issued oppressive decrees prohibiting the printing of any book, except with the commissioners' licence. Preaching, by any but authorised ministers, had been forbidden before. Thus, while popery was professed to be abolished, one of its worst features, the employment of the secular power, to enforce certain doctrines and practices, and to extirpate others, was still inconsistently perpetuated.

The Commons gradually took part with the puritans, in resisting the despotic measures of the queen and bishops, the arduous struggle was kept up throughout the rest of her reign, and a bold spirit of opposition gained ground. Even Hume, whose prejudices were strong against the puritans, acknowledges "that the precious spark of liberty had been kindled, and was preserved by them, and that to this body the English owe the freedom of their constitution." To a great extent this is doubtless true. Yet it must be admitted that most of them were anxious, not only for the circulation of their own religious principles, but for the enforcement of them by the laws of the land. They thought the civil authority necessary to uphold the truth, and were not fully sensible of the duty and the benefits of complete religious liberty.

¹ Strype's Eccles. Mem., vol. iii.; Brook's Civil and Religious Liberty, vol. i.

Sir James Mackintosh asserts that puritanism and the papacy were agreed in one leading object—to render the temporal subject to the spiritual power, and that this was the common aim of Knox and Hildebrand!¹ Well is it for the civil and religious liberty of Europe, that other counteracting principles of puritanism have contributed largely to defeat such attempts!

King James, notwithstanding his early professions, pursued the same path of religious intolerance as his predecessor. Hopes had been excited that he would have effected a further religious reformation; but these hopes were soon disappointed; for the king, flattered by the bishops, refused to yield anything, and the arbitrary Court of High Commission continued its persecuting course. The Brownists took the name of Independents about 1616, under some relaxation of the former puritan discipline. Through the reigns of James and Charles I., the language and measures of the two great religious parties, having lost much of the Christian character, became every year more political and violent, until they ended in civil war, and in the overthrow of the royal and episcopal authority. The dissatisfaction caused in Scotland, by the forced introduction of the bishops and the liturgy, tended strongly to this result.

Still, under the Commonwealth and Protectorate, the descendants of the very men who had struggled and bled for liberty of conscience to themselves, intoxicated by the possession of power, and by the idle but long cherished phantom of uniformity in faith and worship, employed that power in their turn, with the same narrow anti-christian spirit, to persecute and punish those who differed from them; and instead of abolishing the union between civil and religious authority, and annihilating the pecuniary endowments for spiritual ministrations, they clung to both and defended them, with a pertinacity almost equal to that of their former holders.

The Friends who sprang up during this period, the Episcopilians and the Papists, but chiefly the first, were now the sufferers; many of the old penal statutes of Elizabeth were revived, and the gaols were again filled with conscientious victims. The abuse of secular power by one religious party after another—by Papists, Protestants, Episcopilians, Presbyterians and Independents—is surely sufficient to show that it never ought to be

¹ History of England.

united with the church under any form, or exercised in spiritual concerns; while the failure of every attempt to enforce uniformity in religion, incontestably proves that such attempts are utterly fruitless. In fact, not one of these parties seems to have been principled against the union of church and state, or the effort to compel the coveted uniformity, though many individuals in each body perceived the evils of both these objects and boldly denounced them. It was one thing to deprecate the exercise of the civil power by others against themselves, but it was another thing to acknowledge the anti-christian character of all such measures, in whatever hands, though esteemed the wisest and the best, and even in their own.¹

Several English rulers, beside Elizabeth, have shown more zeal for religious liberty abroad than in their own country. Such was the case with Cromwell, who nobly maintained the cause of the oppressed Waldenses; and though he professed to be, and probably was, friendly to full toleration, yet great persecutions were perpetrated in England under his name, and the measures of many of his supporters, of which he could not be ignorant, were violent, false and selfish. Had he boldly and faithfully applied the tithes, as well as the other temporalities of the church, to civil objects of common interest and necessity, he would have rendered great service to the nation, the apple of discord would have been taken away, and the aspirants to religious supremacy would have been deprived of their great motive; but ambition and avarice prevailed, and the Presbyterians and Independents reserved for themselves a golden prize, which they could not hold, and which proved one great cause of their speedy downfall.

The Independents were perhaps the most favourable of any of the parties in power to religious toleration, and even they shrank from extending it to popery, prelacy, and some other forms of religion.² The Friends, though never possessing civil authority in England, were always advocates of complete toleration. William Penn's consistent and manly assertion of it at home brought him into suspicion and trouble more than once; while his example in the new world will long be remembered with respect and admiration!

Some of the strict Presbyterians pronounced toleration "a

¹ Neal's Puritans.

² Ibid. vol. iv.

root of gall and bitterness," "a door for libertinism and profaneness," declaring that it ought to be rejected as "soul poison!" All who differed from them they termed sectaries. Seldom has the great right of liberty of conscience been more wantonly disregarded than by them, in violation of former professions.

Cromwell appears to have been much more favourable to such an entire liberty, and more opposed to any interference of the magistrate in matters of religion, than the parliament and most of those who were about him. He reasoned very justly with the Scotch Presbyterian ministers:—"Where do you find in Scripture that preaching is included [or limited] within your functions? Though an approbation from men has order in it, and may be well, yet he that hath not a better than that, hath none at all. I hope He that ascended up on high may give His gifts to whom He pleases, and if those gifts be the seal of missions, be not you envious though Eldad and Medad prophesy. It will be found an unjust and unwise jealousy to deny a man the liberty he hath by nature, on a supposition that he may abuse it."¹

Soon after the death of Cromwell, on the restoration of the king and the bishops, the efforts to effect a union between episcopacy and presbyterianism proving in vain, and the party in power refusing to yield anything, the Act for Uniformity was again passed by both Houses of Parliament, contrary to the king's declaration from Breda. There was now a complete change in the subjects of persecution, except that the Friends still partook of a large share. The prisons were crowded, and the sufferings of many conscientious ministers and others, who adhered to their principles, were very severe. This remained the case for about twenty-five years, during the reign of Charles II.; and though the process was slow, yet a larger number seem to have fallen victims to oppression during this period, on account of their religious principles, than even in the two reigns of Mary and Elizabeth. The king, however, being careless about religion, and favouring the Roman Catholics, showed himself less opposed to liberty of conscience than the bishops and parliament, who determined if possible to extirpate schism. It was during this reign that the oppressive Corpora-

¹ Neal's Puritans, vol. iv.

tion and Test Acts were passed, prohibiting all persons from filling any magisterial or corporate office, or any place of trust under the crown, without having previously taken the "sacrament of the Lord's supper" within a limited period. The object of these acts was to exclude all dissenters, and they continued in force for about 150 years till 1828, when they were repealed after a protracted struggle. Dr. Chalmers rejoiced on that occasion, "that the Scottish presbyterian establishment had never been fenced with such imagined safeguards;" the absence of which he thought had tended to procure for it "the love and veneration of the people."

King James II., actuated probably by various motives, released, soon after his accession, about 1500 sufferers who survived, many more having sunk from time to time under their long and unwholesome confinement. William III., by the Act of Toleration passed in 1689, and by other liberal measures in conformity with the increasing light of the age, at length put a stop to persecutions for religion, and secured for all classes of his subjects personal liberty, in the exercise of conscience—a blessing which has ever since, to a large extent, been enjoyed.

Yet, it must not be forgotten that the established church has abated nothing in its imperative claims on the whole nation for pecuniary support, and that its ministers and members continue to be invested with privileges, far superior to those of any of the other churches. It has withdrawn no demand in its own favour, but has become satisfied to support such demands by legal process and distresses of property, without vindictively proceeding against the persons of non-conformists. The spirit of the age became long since too strong for the latter; it is now taking another step in advance, and becoming too strong for the former! And this, be it observed, is no unfair encroachment on the part of dissenters, but an assertion of just claims and of natural rights!

3rd Section.—The Convocation.

From very ancient times, the bishop, chief presbyter or superintendent of each small district or diocese, had the power, in Britain, as well as in other countries, to convene his ministers

or "clergy," and to transact with them, at such council or synod, affairs relating to the order and government of the local churches. These assemblies, at which the people or "laity" had also the right to be present, were held periodically, or according to exigencies which arose, and were continued occasionally in England, through the various changes of government down to the time of Henry VIII. In the same manner, the archbishop of each province assembled the bishops and some of the clergy at a provincial council, for the consideration of such spiritual matters as came within their jurisdiction.

And at a very early period, the bishops and some of the abbots and priors, being the most learned and influential persons of the community, were brought into the parliament or "Wittenagemote" of the nation, to assist in the transaction of its business; in which, as opulent subjects, they were largely concerned. William the Conqueror first treated them as barons, and made them subject to civil services and payments. He also removed ecclesiastical causes, and suits for the recovery of tithes, from the civil courts, and established special tribunals for their adjudication. In these the clergy were unfairly the judges, and severe censures were dealt on the refractory.¹ Fuller says, that in the forty-ninth year of Henry III., no less than sixty-four abbots and thirty-six priors were called to parliament; but that this number being too large, Edward I. reduced it to twenty-five and two. Afterwards twenty-seven abbots and two priors regularly enjoyed the privilege, till the dissolution of the religious houses.²

Even in the time of the Saxons, the parochial and other ministers, being liberally endowed, had been convened as a separate body by the king's writ, to determine on the amount of their aids to the state. This general assembly was afterwards termed a convocation.³ Of this body Judge Blackstone says⁴ that it differs considerably in its constitution from the synods of other Christian kingdoms, these consisting wholly of bishops; whereas in Britain the ministers meet also, and the convocation is the miniature of the parliament. The Archbishop of Canterbury presides with regal state; the upper house of the bishops sitting

¹ Blackstone, iv. 3—2.

² Burn's Ecclesiastical Law.—Monasteries.

³ Burn's Ecclesiastical Law. ⁴ Commentaries, 1, 7—5.

as the lords, and the lower house, composed of representatives of the several dioceses and of each chapter, resembling the commons, and appointing its own prolocutor or speaker.

This constitution originated in the policy and necessity of Edward I., who in 1219, when the knights, citizens and burgesses were first summoned to parliament, issued also his writ to the bishops of England, to call together the clergy of their dioceses at Westminster, to give him their help and counsel, with the intention that they should act as a third estate. The ecclesiastics had strongly objected to contribute any part towards the general expenses of the nation, and warm contests arose between the king and themselves on this account. The archbishops and bishops threatened to excommunicate the king, while he and his barons, aware of their intention, outlawed all their opponents, and seized their possessions. Being humbled by so strong a measure, they consented to meet on the joint summons of the king and the archbishop.¹ This was the first national assembly to which the lower ecclesiastics were called by the king's writ, to share in the privilege of forming canons. His object however was, not so much to extend their privileges, as to obtain aids, and to introduce a method of taxing ecclesiastical benefices by consent of convocation. He accordingly demanded half of their profits for one year. Archbishop Wake states, that in 1380 the Parliament agreed that they would grant the king £100,000 a-year, provided the clergy would bear one-third of the charge. To this they replied that their grants were not made in Parliament. They appear however to have frequently contributed in that proportion.

In the primitive church the laity were present at all ecclesiastical synods, and took a part or had a voice in the management of the affairs. On the same principle, since their attendance has been discontinued, no proceedings of the king and ecclesiastics alone have been considered binding without an Act of Parliament,² where the people are represented. The assent of the monarch has always been held to be essential, no acts of the body being valid without it.

The extent of the powers of the convocation caused frequent disputes between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, until at length, in the reign of Henry VIII., "The Act of Submission"

¹ Keightley's History of England. ² Burn's Ecclesiastical Law.

(25 Henry VIII., c. 19) was passed, to establish the king's prerogative, and to prevent such disputes in future. This Act, by which the ecclesiastics and convocation may be said to be bound hand and foot, concludes as follows :—“ It is therefore enacted, according to the said submission, that neither they nor any of them [the king's humble and obedient subjects the clergy of this realm of England] shall presume to attempt, allege, claim, or put in use any constitutions or ordinances provincial, by whatsoever name or names they may be called, in their convocations in time coming (which always shall be assembled by authority of the king's writ), unless the same clergy may have the king's most royal assent and licence, to make, promulge and execute such canons, constitutions and ordinances, provincial or synodal, upon pain of every one of the said clergy doing contrary to this Act, and being thereof convict, to suffer imprisonment and make fine at the king's will.” Thus the submission of the English ecclesiastical body was rendered complete, and the Act remains in full force down to the present time.

The convocation continued to meet when summoned by the king, and to pass such resolutions as were dictated to them ; but in 1665 the clergy yielded up the right of meeting to determine the amount of their subsidies to the state, and submitted to be taxed by the House of Commons, receiving as an equivalent the right to vote for members of Parliament. They had never pretended to act as a synod, and from that time they have generally met only in form, and at once adjourned. In 1700 the two houses of convocation disagreed in sentiment ; the lower house wishing to discuss certain controverted points, and objecting to an adjournment. Great altercations arose, which were terminated only by a dissolution ; but the controversies as to their powers and privileges were long maintained through the press. No business has been transacted by the convocation since 1717 ; and though it still meets at Westminster on the assembling of each new Parliament, it is merely as a form, the sittings being almost immediately closed, and the discussions cut short by a prorogation under the royal authority, in spite of many attempts to establish a power of its own.

The lower house is composed of 143 members, who are all ecclesiastics, 22 being deans, 53 archdeacons, 24 prebendaries or proctors of chapters, and 44 proctors of parochial ministers.

Thus more than two-thirds of the whole number are connected with the bishops and cathedrals, and less than one-third with the incumbents of the parishes. Neither the curates nor the church-members at large are represented. So that in fact the convocation cannot be said to represent the great body of the church, although the 139th canon asserts, on pain of excommunication for denial, that it "is the true church of England by representation."

The business of the convocation now consists merely in recognizing and confirming what the last Parliament has done in ecclesiastical matters, and in voting an address to the sovereign, these being things of course and not of serious deliberation. It has sometimes attempted to discuss points of doctrine and discipline, but these do not appear to be constitutionally within its province. The proceedings being confined to the interests of the episcopal body, and often marked with a spirit behind that of the age, have rarely possessed much weight or interest with the public.

In 1646, when episcopacy had been abolished, and the presbyterians were in power, they attempted to establish their form of church-government throughout the nation. England was divided into provinces instead of dioceses, every parish had its presbytery, a number of these constituted classes, the classes sent representatives to the provincial assembly, as the provincial did to the national. The first provincial assembly, that of London, met there in 1647; but these meetings, under the authority of parliament, were less general than other voluntary associations at the same time. The national assembly was designed to occupy the place of the episcopal convocation, and was equally intolerant. Both were successively supported by the secular power; and presbyters or elders were substituted for prelates and episcopal ministers. The nation being greatly divided on matters of religion, this form of church-government obtained but partial hold, and was of short duration.

Merle D'Aubigné thus sarcastically describes the episcopal convocation in its present state: "It is the shadow of a body, which, having the shadow of a jurisdiction, holds the shadow of an assembly; and then all these shadows dissolve and vanish, under the antique arches and among the pillars and tombs of the Gothic abbey." He very naturally remarks that the church

of England ought to have a government independent of the Parliament. "How can any one," says he, "deny the necessity of an ecclesiastical representation, in which the members of the church, and not the ministers alone, may be heard?—Many are the proofs of this want, which is felt more and more. An ecclesiastical constitution, inspired by a spirit of wisdom and piety, would remedy the evil."¹

The Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol lately acknowledged that the history of the convocation, when permitted to sit, contained little more than the record of the struggles between the two great parties in the episcopal body. The high church party have long been anxious that the discipline, doctrine, and other affairs of the Anglican church should be placed in reality under the convocation—an arrangement which would release it from the control of the state; but a general feeling prevails, not very complimentary to the ecclesiastical authorities,—that it would be unsafe to allow this body, as now constituted, to rule. A considerable mixture of those termed lay persons, or in other words, the members or representatives of the church at large, according to primitive usage, would seem to be a very necessary ingredient. The state must not part with its authority, say the reasonable part of the public, so long as it allows its emoluments and other privileges to be enjoyed.

4th Section.—Ecclesiastical or Spiritual Courts.

Under the earliest British sovereigns who succeeded the reformation, special ecclesiastical courts of a most inquisitorial and oppressive character were established, as before mentioned; chiefly for the detection and punishment of opinions and forms of worship contrary to the religion established by law. Such were the courts of high commission and the star-chamber, whose despotic measures, in opposition to the great principles of the British constitution, were so severely felt in the reigns of Henry VIII., Elizabeth and James. They were finally abolished by statute in the sixteenth year of Charles I.

The lowest of the "spiritual courts" are "*the peculiars*," for small districts having an independent jurisdiction of their own, and exempt from that of the bishop. They are 285 in number, and their limits and authority are ill-defined and arbitrary.

¹ Germany, England and Scotland.

Next in ascending rank is "*the archdeacon's court*," of which class there are thirty-five, varying in their jurisdiction; the judge is called the official of the archdeacon. In each diocese is also a "*consistorial or diocesan court*," in which either the bishop himself, his chancellor or commissary presides, being the supreme and sole authority. "*The provincial courts*" belong to the two archbishops. In "*the prerogative court*" of the Archbishop of Canterbury, wills are proved and administrations taken; any contest about such matters is also decided in this court;¹ 7000 are said to be the average number of wills proved in it, and 3000 the grants of administrations every year. Appeals from all these may be preferred to "*the court of arches*," which sits in London; its judge being a doctor of civil law, and its pleadings carried on in Latin. From this an appeal lies to "*the judicial committee of the privy council*," which is the highest authority.

The ecclesiastical or canon law, according to which these courts chiefly proceed, emanated originally from popes, councils and synods, and is often at variance with civil law. The bishop appoints the judges, advocates and proctors within each diocese, and can remove them at his pleasure. They must swear obedience to his lawful commands, and belief in the thirty-nine articles. Very few practitioners are allowed in these courts. Trial by jury is unknown. Witnesses are examined privately by written interrogatories, and the parties accused do not meet their accusers face to face, so that there is little chance of a fair representation, or a just judgment! Excommunication is the penalty for contempt of sentence. Fines and long imprisonment sometimes follow. Nearly one-half of the courts are frequently "*inhibited*" or closed, to the great inconvenience and loss of suitors. Their jurisdiction embraces matters relating to wills and administrations, as far as personal property is concerned. It also regulates cases of marriages, divorce, defamation, heresy, &c., beside points of more direct ecclesiastical discipline. Various old unrepealed statutes confer on these odious courts extraordinary and highly objectionable powers! Many lucrative

¹ In a return made to the House of Commons on courts granting probates, it is stated that, from the year "1653 to 1660, all wills were proved before the judges at Westminster." It was at that time proposed to deprive the ecclesiastical courts of testamentary jurisdiction.

offices in them are complete sinecures, and are often filled by juniors or other incompetent persons, being near connexions of church dignitaries, to the great disgrace of the system ! The expenses of suits are excessive ; and are chiefly in the shape of fees to the officers. Ancient custom has brought many matters very unreasonably under the cognizance of some of these courts ; and the custom varies in different districts. Such matters are “confirming of church-rates, licences to practise surgery,” &c. &c. The citations express the ground to be for the “soul’s health.” Cases of tithe rent-charge have been removed by the Commutation Act to the civil courts, but “church-rate cases” are still under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction.¹ It is manifestly out of the province of ministers of religion to adjudicate, as such, many of these matters.

Bishop Burnet candidly observes, “It has been the burden of my life to see how the ecclesiastical jurisdiction was administered. Our courts are dilatory and expensive, and their constitution is bad, so that they are universally dreaded and hated. Matrimonial and testamentary causes should be left to lay hands. We are fatally tied down to all that was in use in the time of Henry VIII., and are in a woeful condition !”²

Many attempts have been made to reconstruct, reform or abolish these courts. George IV. issued a commission in 1830, to inquire into their jurisdiction, and into the expediency of its being “taken away or altered.” William IV. continued the commissioners, who in 1831 made a report, which was printed in 1832, and reprinted in 1843 : some of its recommendations have been partially acted on. But it is most manifest that the whole system of these vexatious, uncertain and expensive courts, their constitution, functions and perquisites, merit severe reprobation, and require thorough investigation and reform ; or, what would be far better for the people at large, complete annihilation ! Woe be to the unfortunate suitor who gets into them, and is dragged from court to court, in a state of utter uncertainty as to the final issue and total costs !

¹ Report on Ecclesiastical Courts ; History and Power of Ecclesiastical Courts, by Muscutt.

² History of his Own Times.—Conclusion.

5th Section.—The British Sovereign the supreme head on earth of the Anglican Church.

"By the ancient laws of this realm," says Lord Coke,¹ "this kingdom of England is an absolute empire and monarchy; consisting of one head, which is the king, and of a body composed of several members, which the law divideth into two parts, the clergy and laity; both of them, next and immediately under God, subject and obedient to the head."

The title of the sovereign is this, "By the grace of God, king of England, France and Ireland, defender of the faith; and of the church of England, and also of Ireland, in earth the supreme head." At the coronation, the monarch swears "That he will, to the utmost of his power, maintain the laws of God, the true profession of the gospel, and the protestant reformed religion established by law: That he will preserve unto the bishops and clergy of the realm, and to the churches committed to their charge, all such rights and privileges as by law do or shall appertain to them;" also "Inviolably to maintain and preserve the settlement of the true protestant religion of the church of England, and its doctrine, worship, discipline and government: and Also the government, worship and discipline, rights and privileges of the church of Scotland, as established by the laws of that kingdom." He further swears, "to govern the people according to the statutes in parliament agreed on, and the laws and customs of the kingdom," &c.

A statute of King William III.² enacts that "Whoever shall come into possession of the crown of England, shall join in communion with the church of England, as by law established."

George III. long objected, and it may be hoped conscientiously, to the terms of the coronation oaths, as restraining him from conceding the Catholic claims, and the abrogation of the Corporation and Test Acts.

6th Section.—The Bishops and their Appointment.

None is admitted to be a bishop in the Anglican church under thirty years of age.

¹ Burn's Ecclesiastical Law.

² 12 and 13 William, c. 2—3.

In the appointment or “consecration,” the following is understood to be the mode of proceeding. After the *congé d’élire* has been issued by the sovereign or the prime minister, and the individual priest has been determined on, the officer, having the written authority or letter missive in his pocket, requires the dean and chapter, with whom the choice nominally rests, to proceed with the election. If they refuse to appoint the minister’s nominee, each of them is liable to the heavy penalties of a *premunire*. The consequence is that he is never rejected.

There seems to be nothing in the shape of a check, beside public opinion, to prevent an unprincipled minister of the crown from forcing on the established church men obviously unsuitable in essential points for so important a charge. Were the crown to nominate three, out of whom the dean and chapter or the church at large should make the selection, or *vice versa*, there would be a greater appearance of propriety.

Every such compulsory election of a bishop is prefaced by solemn prayer and invocation of the Holy Ghost, to guide them to a right choice, all well knowing at the same time who must be elected. This professed appeal to the Most High being ended, the appointment of the party whom they are bound to elect proceeds as a matter of course. The splendour and worldly spirit of the ceremonial contrasts widely with the spiritual profession and religious nature of the thing itself.

The archbishop says, in solemn terms, to the bishop elect, “Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a bishop in the church of God, now committed to thee by the imposition of our hands. And remember that thou stir up the grace of God, which is given thee by this imposition of our hands.” The new bishop is then ranked among the successors of the Apostles.

How lamentable is this method of mingling the highest religious profession with the really secular or political character! “I doubt,” says Denison, a late writer,¹ “whether the whole history of the church supply any worse example, not simply of abdication of the church’s office, but of mockery of the privileges vouchsafed to her by God!”

After a bishop has been invested and consecrated, he is introduced to the presence of the sovereign, and has to do homage for his barony or temporalities, which fall to the monarch in his

¹ Pamphlet on the Bishops, 1851.

character of head of the state on the death of each bishop ; as does also the charge of providing for the spiritual functions, in his character of head of the church.

In one part of the ceremony, the party chosen to be a bishop, being applied to for his consent, is expected publicly to refuse in the words "*nolo episcopari*,"¹ and to attempt to leave the place ; when his companions seize him and bring him back ! This is a strange comic scene for the investiture of what ought to be a holy, spiritual office !

The bishops of the Anglican church are entitled peers or "lords spiritual," and as such they sit in the Upper House of Parliament. Their right to do so appears to have grown up from ancient usage. At certain periods they considered their attendance there as a token of subjection, and were excused from judgment in civil causes, as they still are in those of life and death. The political character, contracted by the bishops through their civil rank, and through sitting in the house of peers, has a strong bias on themselves and on the inferior clergy, tending to secularise their conduct and to bennumb their pastoral influence. It has made bishops courtiers, withdrawn them from their provincial duties, and estranged them from the humbler ranks, both lay and clerical. Nor have they atoned for these evils by their conduct as legislators : their voices and votes have rarely been distinguished by supporting the cause of liberty of conscience, suffering humanity or enlightened legislation ! Whether wearing the lawn as spiritual barons, or elevated on the throne in their own cathedrals, they bear but little resemblance to the humble apostles whom they profess to succeed !

In other protestant communions the bishops do not possess political dignity ; in most of them the ecclesiastical authority is vested in synods or consistories. Even in France the Roman catholic bishops enjoy no secular power.

7th Section.—Priests and Deacons, their Ordination, &c.

The officers in the ancient Christian church were usually ordained or appointed with the imposition of hands and prayer, the people at large having a share in the nomination. In the English church no person is admitted to be a deacon until he is

¹ Quarterly Review, 1852.

twenty-three years of age, nor to be a priest under twenty-four, and till he has been a deacon for at least one year. Notice is required to be given in the parish where any candidate resides; and if any person knows any just cause why he should not be admitted into holy orders, or any impediment thereto, such person is to declare the same. Some small trace of the ancient practice to regard the voice of the people may be discovered in this, and in a subsequent appeal of the same kind; but, in fact, both now amount to little or nothing, and are considered as matters of form.

When deacons are to be ordained, the archdeacon or his deputy presents the candidates to the bishop, who asks if he has made due enquiry of them, and then asks the people if they know any notable impediment or crime in any of them. No objection appearing, the bishop, laying his hands on the head of the individual, who humbly kneels before him, uses these words:—“Take thou authority to execute the office of a deacon in the church of God, committed unto thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.”

The bishop next delivers to him the New Testament, and says, “Take thou authority to read the Gospel in the church of God, and to preach the same if thou be thereto licenced by the bishop himself.” He is then informed that he must continue in the office of deacon for one year, to the intent that he may be perfect before he is admitted to the priesthood. No person is to be made both deacon and priest in one day.

When priests are ordained, the bishop solemnly enquires of each whether he believes himself “moved by the Holy Ghost, and called according to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ, to take upon” him that “office and calling;” to which he is expected to answer in the affirmative. The bishop then appeals to the people, that if any one knows any impediment or notable schisms in the candidates he shall come forth and show it. No sufficient objection appearing, the bishop administers to the parties the oaths of allegiance and supremacy. He next desires the congregation to recommend them to God in their private prayers, for doing which there is a competent time of silence. Vocal prayers and singing follow; after which the bishop and the priests present lay their hands severally on the head of all who receive the order of the priesthood, these humbly kneeling, and the bishop

saying to each, "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive they are forgiven, and whose sins thou dost retain they are retained. And be thou a faithful dispenser of the Word of God, and of his holy sacraments; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

This form is said by Selden not to have been used in the Christian church till more than a thousand years after Christ. On those solemn words the Bishop of Oxford (Wilberforce) remarks, "All this is *the most blasphemous frivolity*, if it be not the deepest truth!"¹ He goes on to declare his own convictions of the latter: many serious unprejudiced Christians will however have their misgivings on the subject! The reformers, who exhibited certain conclusions to Parliament in 1395, declared, "We do not see that the Holy Ghost doth give any good gift through such signs or ceremonies: for it is a lamentable and dolorous mockery unto wise men to see the bishops mock and play with the Holy Ghost in giving of their orders."² Archbishop Cranmer expressed his opinion that "there is no more promise of God that grace is given in the committing of the ecclesiastical office, than in the committing of the civil office. In the Apostles' time," he added, "when there were no Christian princes, the appointment of ministers was by the consent of the multitudes among themselves."²

The bishop next delivers the Bible into the hand of each of them kneeling, and says, "Take thou authority to preach the Word of God, and to administer the holy sacraments in the congregation, where thou shalt be lawfully appointed thereunto."

If any person receive money or other profit, directly or immediately, or any promise of the same to himself or his friends, for the ordaining of any minister, he is liable to forfeit £40, &c.

The deacon is "to assist the priest in divine service, and especially at the holy communion, to read holy scriptures and homilies in the church, to instruct the youth in the catechism in the absence of the priest, to baptize infants, and to preach if licensed by the bishop; also to search for the sick, poor, and impotent, and to inform the curate that they may be relieved

¹ Fox's *Acts and Mon.* vol. i.

² Burnet's *Reformation*, vol. i.—Records.

with alms." He may perform all the offices in the liturgy, except "consecrating the sacrament" of the supper and pronouncing absolution ; but till admitted to be a priest, he is not capable of accepting any benefice or other ecclesiastical promotion.

The canons prohibit any person from preaching, although he may have been ordained a priest, "except he be licenced by the bishop of the diocese, or by the archbishop of the province." This restriction places every episcopal minister, who desires to exercise his functions, under complete subjection to his bishop, who, as he thinks proper, may approve or disapprove, and silence such minister without assigning any reason. The licence may even be withdrawn at any time. Beneficed ministers as well as curates are thus always at the mercy of the diocesan, and have often been made to feel "the iron hand" which rules them.

The university of Cambridge, through a bull of Pope Alexander VI., possessed the right at the time of the reformation to licence twelve ministers yearly, to preach throughout England for term of life, without a bishop's licence. This privilege they used, in spite of threats, to protect many Puritan ministers.¹ No such authority is believed now to exist.

To obtain a benefice or living, a clerk must procure a presentation signed by the patron, and present it to the bishop with his testimonials. "After induction by the archdeacon or his deputy, by delivery of a bell-rope, he is to be left alone in the church, and to toll the bell," which completes the ceremony.²

Within two weeks after obtaining possession, he is required to read aloud on some Lord's-day the thirty-nine articles, and to declare publicly before the congregation his "unfeigned assent and consent to all and everything contained in the book of common prayer, and administration of the sacraments, and other rites and ceremonies of the Church of England, and the manner of ordaining and consecrating bishops, priests and deacons." He has also to subscribe a declaration of his conformity.

Bishop Burnet, speaking of his own time, says, "the requiring subscriptions to the thirty-nine articles is a great imposition ; the greater part (of ministers) subscribe without ever examining them, and others because they must do it, though they can hardly satisfy their consciences." To a considerable extent, doubtless, these remarks are still applicable.

¹ Neal's Puritans.

² "Present State of Great Britain," 1715.

One distinguishing evil of the system is, that the appointment or ordination of a priest or deacon is an appointment for life, and that, according to the maxim of the Roman Catholic Church, "the sacrament of holy orders is indelible." Once a priest, and always a priest. Hence parishes may be encumbered and their highest interests may suffer, as long as the individual lives. Once presented and inducted, it is a difficult and expensive matter to displace him, though he may be well known to disgrace his spiritual and moral character. Woe to the parish that finds itself in such an evil predicament!

Every parochial minister is required, "on each Sunday and holyday, before morning and evening prayer, to catechise and instruct, for half-an-hour or more, the youth and ignorant persons of his parish, in the ten commandments, the articles of belief, the Lord's prayer, and the catechism," on pain of very severe penalties. For the first offence, on presentation by the churchwardens, sharp reproof; for the second, suspension; and for the third, excommunication. The penalties on parents neglecting to send their children to be instructed, are almost equally heavy. But the whole of these injunctions, with many others, are now very much a dead letter. If the Episcopal Church had really the management of its own discipline and regulations, such discrepancies between the rules and the practice, it is reasonable to conclude, would soon be removed.

8th Section.—Deans and Chapters.

The office of rural dean is of great antiquity, and was early charged with important functions. On the suppression of the monasteries and other religious houses by Henry VIII. a large portion of their estates was vested in a new order of trustees, under the name of deans and chapters of the cathedrals. The duties of these bodies, and the purposes for which the revenues were to be employed, are clearly defined in the statutes of their foundation, and in the following general preamble to the charters:—"That youth may be liberally trained, old age fostered with things necessary for living; and that liberal largesses of alms to the poor in Christ, and reparations of roads and bridges, and other offices of piety, teeming over from them, might thence flow abroad far and wide to all the neighbouring

places ; to the glory of Almighty God, and to the common welfare and happiness of the subjects of the realm."

The different classes of officers in each cathedral, the objects to be benefited, and the number in each class, were prescribed by the statutes. In the metropolitan church of Canterbury, the language used is "First of all we ordain and direct that there be for ever one dean, twelve canons, six preachers, twelve minor canons, one deacon, one subdeacon, twelve lay clerks, one master of the choristers, ten choristers, two teachers of the boys in grammar, fifty boys to be instructed, twelve poor men to be maintained at the costs and charges of the said church, two vergers, &c. &c." All these were to be boarded and otherwise provided in the cathedral establishment, on the funds entrusted to the dean and chapter ; a definite salary being allowed for each ; thus absorbing the whole of the capitular revenues, in exact proportion between the officers and the objects of the trust. An especial obligation is imposed on the successive trustees to care for the humbler classes and recipients ; and a certain number of the grammar boys are to be maintained at Cambridge and Oxford, out of the same funds, after leaving the school.

Solemn oaths, to observe and keep all the statutes and ordinances of the foundation, are required of the dean and of each of the canons, on their appointment ; yet it appears that, in most of these establishments, the revenues have been almost entirely absorbed by the officials and their relations, to the amount of £1000., £2000., or £3000. a year each ; while the objects of their charge have been reduced to a mere pittance, or the schools have been wholly shut up ! The minor canons, who perform the greater part of the duty, have in general only the means of a bare living ; the prebendary or canon frequently possessing at the same time, from his office or from several offices together, a very considerable income ! The number of poor men supported out of the revenues is reduced in a proportion equal to that of the scholars ; and wealthy relations have in many cases unjustly divided amongst themselves the large revenues, originally designed for education, for the aged, and for other purposes of general utility ! How long shall such gross misapplications of the public funds be suffered to be carried on by professedly spiritual persons ?

A daily service is performed at each of the cathedrals, but in many instances in a very hasty and irreverent manner; the consequence is that the congregations are frequently less numerous than the officials in attendance! and being mostly their own families, pensioners, or curious visitors, do not amount to one in five hundred of the population. The whole service, though said to be highly imposing on the senses by its harmony, must be acknowledged to have an appearance and effect little better than a mere musical performance, instead of edifying devotional worship.

Unproductive of the excellent objects contemplated in the first foundation, these establishments may be complained of in the very same terms as the monastic institutions to which they succeeded, “for the well known abuses and violations of the trust reposed in them.”¹ And yet this misapplication of the existing revenues is allowed to proceed, and the nation is repeatedly harassed with urgent entreaties for the relief of spiritual destitution, by providing large additional means.

A proper economy, and due employment of the rich resources already possessed, ought surely to obtain that close attention, which would relieve both the episcopal church and the nation; but, until enforced by the state, reform in these and other respects is not very likely to take place.²

9th Section.—Parish Clerks.

These, in ancient times, were poor or inferior ministers, one being appointed in each parish to assist the priest. They were to be “Twenty years of age at least, and of honest conversation, with competent knowledge to read, write, and sing if it might be.” The right of appointment is said to have been originally in the minister; but, like many other matters, it has been the subject of frequent contests between him and his parishioners, and is very much governed by the custom of every parish. When the clerk is licenced by the bishop, he is sworn

¹ Henry VIII., 27, c. xxviii.

² These plain remarks, and others of a similar nature, are not designed to irritate and offend, but to excite a serious and deep investigation into the abuses stated, that a proper remedy may be speedily applied, and that the funds may be employed, as was originally intended, for purposes of public utility.

to obey the minister. The people were formerly enjoined to supply him with necessaries, wherever customary to do so. The office is now occasionally filled by men whose conduct is a reproach to their profession; private interest and the want of discipline operating against their removal. Does the alliance with the state confer any benefits on the Anglican church, making amends for the privation of self-government and reformation under which it obviously labours?

10th Section.—*Churchwardens, &c.*

The bishops were wont, in early times, to summon to their periodical meetings or episcopal synods, two, three, or more creditable persons of each parish; who were bound by oath to present heretics, and all other irregular persons, whether ministers or people; they were afterwards appointed annually by the parishioners; as were others called *synod's-men*, and by corruption *sides-men*, also sometimes *quest-men*, from their duty to make inquiry and present offenders. Until a little before the reformation, the latter acted as assistants to the churchwardens; but about that time these were expected to perform the whole duties, the office of sides-men becoming nearly obsolete.

The great want of discipline, and of keeping pace with the change of circumstances, is forcibly exhibited with respect to the office of churchwardens. These "lay functionaries" are chosen "at Easter" every year, one by the minister and one by the people, unless a custom exists to the contrary. They and the deacons were accustomed to take charge of the collections and other funds for the poor. Disciplinary duties of serious importance, as well as provision for the repairs and services of the places of worship, are imposed on the churchwardens by the canons; and they enter into very solemn engagements to fulfil them, and to present, or make returns to their superiors, in each of the following cases, as well as on other matters.

"Of all persons, not being dissenters, and having no reasonable cause of absence, who do not frequent divine service on Sundays and all holy days. Of all papists. Of every lay person, not being a dissenter, or a perjured churchwarden, or a notorious offender, who does not receive the holy communion

three times every year. Of all who offend by any species of immorality. Of clergymen who do not say or sing the Common Prayer at the times appointed, and the Litany as prescribed; particularly on Wednesdays weekly, at the tolling of the bell. Of clergymen allowing any persons to be godfathers or godmothers who are parents, or who have not received the holy communion, and of ministers who do not regularly catechize the children on Sundays, and all holy days!"

Instructions and questions of a most searching nature are addressed to the churchwardens every year, relating to the preaching, behaviour and doctrine of the minister, and to the moral conduct of the parishioners. Duties somewhat similar were vested in the rural deans of earlier ages.

An oath was formerly required of the churchwardens, sidesmen and assistants, that they would faithfully discharge all these particulars; but by the 5th and 6th of William IV. cap. 62, for the abolition of oaths, a solemn declaration is substituted. This however ought to be equally binding on reflecting and conscientious persons. Generally speaking, attention to the more serious part of these obligations is entirely neglected, in violation of the solemn engagements of the officers! Thus, the duties prescribed being in some respects more stringent than the circumstances of the age sanction, the regulations are suffered to become very much a dead letter, and the discipline is wholly disregarded. With it, the part formerly taken by the congregation in the management of church affairs has gradually fallen into desuetude. When will the episcopal church awake to a true sense of her real position, dissolve her union with the state, shake off the golden chains, and take the restoration of her discipline and the management of her affairs into her own hands?

11th Section.—Dissenters and Papists.

The enactments against both these classes were formerly very rigid. In the days of popery, all the people were expected to be of one opinion on religious matters, and nonconformity was not tolerated. Hence arose, as has been already remarked, requirements of pecuniary payment and of personal attendance

at the national worship, exacted from all the people without distinction.

As respects dissenters, this anomaly was to some extent corrected, or in legal phrase, the laws against them were “conditionally suspended,” by the Toleration Act,¹ and by other statutes. But the crying evil still exists, that they have to pay for the support of ministers and services, which they neither attend nor approve; and are placed on a footing unequal, in many respects, to that of episcopalians.

From the time of Charles II. till so lately as 1828, or during a century and a half, dissenters were wholly disqualified by those termed the Corporation and Test Acts, from holding any office in corporations or in the state. To prevent them from doing so, all persons taking such offices were required by two acts of Charles II.,² to have received, within a short period previously, what is termed the sacrament of the Lord’s supper, according to the rites of the church of England. The object of these acts was to provide a safeguard for that church against sectarian power and influence. In order still to afford protection to the established church, when they were repealed, every person appointed to such offices was obliged, by the repealing act, (9 Geo. IV. cap 17,) to make a solemn declaration, that he would not use any power or influence of such office to injure the established church, or its bishops or clergy, in their rights and privileges:—a regulation which is still in force. To many minds this enactment carries the impression of an attempt to prevent the redress of an obvious wrong, of an injustice which was so likely to excite opposition, that a stringent measure was required to guard against it.

Dr. Chalmers fully approved of the general repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, and remarks that it was at first proposed that the declaration, which was substituted for them, should embrace also the church of Scotland, but that it was afterwards resolved by the English authorities, “to keep the whole of this stigma to themselves!”

It was long ago justly remarked, that it is rather dissent which tolerates an established church, than the established church which tolerates dissent!

¹ William and Mary, 1- 18.

² 13 Car. ii. 2- 1, and 25 Car. ii. 2.

As respects papists, the laws have been in letter highly severe till very recently ; while in fact their operation has for a long time been generally harmless. The enactments against them had three degrees of severity ; viewing them either simply as papists, or as popish recusants, or as popish recusants convict. *A popish recusant* is defined to be a papist, who refuses (when legally required) to attend the religious services of the church of England ; and a *popish recusant convict* is a papist legally convicted of such offence. Many protestant dissenters, and especially members of the Society of Friends, were severely dealt with in the reign of Charles II., on the pretended ground of being popish recusants. The absurd and vexatious restrictions and penalties against these were as follows. They were subject to heavy fines for not attending the established worship. They were not to possess any horse above the value of £5. Each of their children was to be baptized in the parish church within a month after birth, on pain of forfeiture of £100. by the parents ! If buried otherwise than in the authorized place and manner, the party burying to forfeit £20.! Any person keeping a popish servant, to forfeit £10. a month, or keeping a popish schoolmaster £10. a month, and the schoolmaster himself liable to perpetual imprisonment! Papists not having taken the oaths, to pay double land-tax, &c., &c. Such were the enactments, which for centuries disgraced the English national code, till as late as 1846 ; when, being too rigorous to be enforced, and unworthy of an enlightened Christian country, they were quietly repealed. Their effect, if any, naturally was, rather to create a sympathy with the papists, and thus to injure the cause of protestantism, than to prevent the diffusion of erroneous doctrines !

The Roman Catholics of this nation laboured also under great civil disabilities, till a very recent period. They were disqualified from sitting in either house of the British Parliament, from voting at the election of members of the House of Commons, from holding civil and military offices under the state, and from being members of corporations. In all these respects, they were relieved by an act of parliament passed after a long and arduous struggle, in 1829, and well known as the " Roman Catholic Relief Bill." All those availing themselves of the benefit of this act, were required thereby to take various

oaths, binding them to good behaviour towards the established church, and not to exercise the acquired power in attempting to subvert or weaken the protestant religion or government, with other provisions to the same effect.

Dr. Chalmers said on that occasion, “I have never had but one sentiment on the subject of the catholic disabilities, and it is, that the protestant cause has been laid by them under very heavy disadvantages! The truth is, that these disabilities have hung as a dead weight around it for more than a century. Single-handed truth walked through our island with the might and prowess of a conqueror; as soon as she was propped with the authority of the state, and the armour of intolerance was given to her, the brilliant career of her victories was ended, and strength went out of her.”¹ Yet these are the acknowledgments of an apologist for religious establishments!

12th Section.—*Excommunication.*

By this ecclesiastical censure, which is so often threatened in the Anglican canons, the person against whom it is pronounced is for the time cast out of the communion of the church. Excommunication is of two kinds; the less and the greater. “The less deprives the offender of participation in the sacraments and in divine worship; the greater deprives him also of the society and conversation of the faithful.” Every person excommunicated is to be openly denounced by the minister every six months, in the parish and cathedral churches; and also to be kept out of the church until absolved. He can neither bring an action, nor receive a benefice, nor act as an advocate, nor be a witness, nor have “Christian burial.”²

Like penance and most other disciplinary institutions of the Anglican state church, this mode of dealing with offenders has long sunk into neglect, and is very rarely carried out. Were it literally observed, all moral delinquents would share its severe consequences; and till very lately, dissenters too were equally punishable! How long will Christian churches permit such solemn enactments to remain as witnesses against themselves, unrepealed but unexecuted?

¹ Chalmers' Works, vol. iii.

² Burn's Ecclesiastical Law.

13th Section.—English Canon Law.

Such of the foreign papal canons as were sanctioned by the king and parliament, obtained authority in England. Since the reformation, various regulations or canons have been enacted by the king, the convocation and the legislature, for the government of the Anglican church; deriving their chief obligation from the royal assent, and enforced through the ecclesiastical courts. Occasionally, when the judgments of such courts, proceeding on canon law, tended to the great injury of individuals, the courts of common law have, on complaint being made, granted prohibitions.¹

The authority vested in the church of England, of establishing discipline or of making canons, was ascertained by a statute of Henry VIII., commonly called the “Act of the Clergy’s Submission,” and referred to in the third section. In it they agreed “not to attempt, allege, claim, or put in use any constitutions or canons, without the king’s assent.” So that, though the power of making such enactments resided in the clergy met in convocation, their force was derived from the authority of the king, assenting to and confirming them. A reformed code of ecclesiastical laws was prepared by Cranmer, but was never confirmed by the royal authority; and the old canon law remained in force till the time of James I.

The “constitutions and canons ecclesiastical,” now recognized, and partially operating in the Anglican church, are 141 in number, and were framed at a convocation held in 1603, under the authority of James I., receiving his confirmation.

“The clergy of England of the present day,” remarks one of their warm friends, “are governed by the synodical constitutions of the papal legates in the reign of Henry III., and by the provincial constitutions of the popish archbishops of Canterbury in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The clerical law is composed of heterogeneous materials, and is vague, indefinite and uncertain in its operation!”²

The power vested in the bishops by the canon-law to grant licences, as in cases of marriage, is evidently a relic of the popish

¹ Blackstone’s Commentaries.—Introduction, 1.

² Lord Henley on Church Reform.

claim to grant dispensations, both being permissions to act contrary to the law of the land. Various other usages still prevailing are derived from the same source; and of later times there has been an evident desire in a large ecclesiastical party, to revive the obsolete usages and powers acquired through the canon law.

14th Section.—Want of Church Discipline.

“The Book of Common Prayer” contains, in the introduction to the form of “commination, or denouncing of judgments against sinners,” the following brief but candid acknowledgment of the want of discipline in the established church: “In the primitive church there was a godly discipline, instead whereof, *until the said discipline may be restored, which is much to be wished,* it is thought good that, at this time in the presence of you all, should be read the general sentences of God’s cursing against impenitent sinners,” &c.

The relaxation or absence of moral discipline has followed, of necessity, from the circumstance of the British sovereign being the head of the church; since the sovereign cannot be safely dealt with for delinquencies of conduct however great. Hence the discipline and Christian character of the established church receive a deadly wound. If the head may be an irreligious or immoral person without censure or notice, the same defect follows as respects private individuals. Is it possible to conceive a state of things more detrimental to religion and virtue, than that vice and wickedness may occupy securely exalted stations in a Christian church.

To the same cause may be also partly attributed the existing want of any clear distinction of membership, which may be pronounced a great deficiency in any religious community. The distinction can scarcely be said to be acknowledged at all, but were it not for the connection with the state, such an evil, it may be presumed, would soon be rectified.

That in a system, most carefully contrived for securing authority and pay to the bishops and ministers, there should be an entire want of spiritual or even moral care and control over the conduct of the members, or private individuals of the church, must be admitted to be a great inconsistency. Surely the eternal interests of the multitude are far more worthy of

careful provision, than the dignity and revenues of the priestly few !

“ I would only ask,” says Lord Bacon, “ why the civil state should be purged and restored by good and wholesome laws, made every third or fourth year in parliament assembled, devising remedies as fast as time breedeth mischief; and contrariwise the ecclesiastical state should still continue upon the dregs of time, and receive no alteration? ”¹

Bishop Burnet fully admitted “ the want of a sound, well regulated discipline,” and spoke of it as “ a great defect.”² Many pious members and ministers of the episcopal church have expressed their regret at the deficiency. But there must be a separation from the state, a recognition of membership, and an appointment of a “ lay,” or mixed, governing constituent body, before this great deficiency can be properly supplied.

Burnet further remarks, “ no inconvenience would follow on leaving out the cross in baptism, or on laying aside surplices, and regulating cathedrals, especially as to that indecent way of singing prayers. The bowings to the altar have at least an ill appearance, and are of no use. All these, with many other things, are now bound on us by a law, that cannot be repealed except in parliament.”² To such a thraldom, attended with obvious spiritual loss, does the episcopal church submit, for the sake of mere worldly riches, honour and power !

¹ Quoted in Lord Henley’s “ Church Reform.”

² *His Own Times; Conclusion.*—Not in a spirit of bitterness and hostility have these defects been exposed, but with a sincere desire that the protestant episcopal church may cast aside the golden fetters of the state, and put on strength, cleanse and order her house, in the name of the Lord.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IRELAND ; ITS CHURCHES, AND ENDOWMENTS FOR ECCLESIASTICAL PURPOSES.

WHOEVER studies the history of this verdant but unhappy isle, and reflects upon it with candour, must admit that, from the time of its first subjugation by the English, it has been treated for many centuries as a conquered country. The inhabitants not being admitted to a just participation in civil and religious rights, but trampled on as serfs, their religious prepossessions outraged, and the lands wrested from their hierarchy and from their nobles by repeated confiscations, it was not to be expected, even on the adoption of a more generous policy, that they would soon forget past grievances, or cordially unite with the parties of whom they had so long and so justly complained.

1st Section.—Protestant Episcopal Church Establishment.

The reformation in England, though still imperfect, was a work mainly of rational and religious conviction, and effected by degrees. In Ireland it could scarcely be called a reformation, being a work of conquest and violence, by which a protestant hierarchy and profession were enforced on an unwilling Roman catholic people. Of this proceeding, so contrary to the genuine spirit of christianity, bitter have been the fruits !

At the union with England in 1801, the fifth clause of the Act stipulated, “that the doctrine, worship, discipline and government of the United Church of England and Ireland shall remain *in full force for ever*, and its preservation shall be *an essential part* of the union, as the same are now by law established;” thus perpetuating, as far as an Act of Parliament can do so, that which had been one chief ground of dissatisfaction—the

forced imposition on all of an extravagant state church for the few! Most of those who have approached this subject have expressed themselves in strong terms of indignation at the many prevailing abuses, and at the cumbrous and expensive character of the ecclesiastical machinery, as contrasted with the poverty of the people, and with the few individuals who in most places compose the congregations!

In the first report of the Irish Commissioners of Public Instruction in 1834, the whole population was given as little less than eight millions. Of these nearly six millions and a half were Roman catholics. The members or attenders of the protestant established church were computed at 853,000; the presbyterians at 643,000; and other denominations about 22,000.¹ The total number of places of worship was at that time 4502, of which 2109 belonged to Roman catholics, 1537 to the established church, 452 to presbyterians, and 404 to other religious bodies. The whole population is now estimated to be reduced to about six millions—an almost unparalleled diminution! The Roman catholics, who had much increased before, have of late years rapidly diminished, through famine, fever, conversion, and especially emigration, and are supposed at present not to exceed four millions, or two-thirds of the whole. The episcopalians are computed at one million. The presbyterians at 700,000, and other dissenters at 300,000.

The total number of parishes or districts was then 2408, and of benefices 1387, many of these consisting of two or more parishes. In 536 benefices there was no glebe-house; in 210 no episcopal place of worship; and in 157 no protestant worship, the incumbents in 340 parishes being non-resident. Of 405, the protestants in no one case numbered 100; in no parish out of 99 did they exceed 20; and in 41 there was not a single episcopal protestant. The landlords of these poor Roman catholic inhabitants are not relieved however from paying the tithe rent-charge. Fifty-one benefices, containing 3030 protestant episcopalians, were what is termed "without cure of souls," the incumbents receiving the incomes, but doing nothing in return!

The injustice and usurpation of a state church establishment, notwithstanding the late changes, are still prominently exhibited in Ireland; the great mass of the people being entirely opposed to the system of ecclesiastical doctrines and services imposed

¹ See Companion to Almanac, 1837.

upon them, and the wealth of many of the officials forming a striking contrast with the fewness of the members and the poverty of the people at large !

In his *Essay on the English Constitution*, Lord John Russell remarked many years ago—" In the church of Ireland there are four archbishops and eighteen bishops, whose united income is estimated at £185,700 a-year. The revenue drawn from fines is enormous, and their landed property is immense!"

The estates belonging to these archbishops and bishops were reported to Parliament in 1831 as containing 669,250 acres, set down at the low net return of £45,258.¹ The land is usually let at small annual rents, on leases for twenty-one years, in consideration of heavy fines charged for the renewal of the leases—an uncertain speculative system for the granter, and an ill-advised injurious one for both parties, as well as for the land itself. Prior to the modern regulations, the number of these dignitaries, and the amount of their revenues were extravagant. One-third of the Irish bishops, elected in triennial rotation, sit as peers in the British Parliament.

By the Church Temporalities Act passed in 1833, an ecclesiastical commission was established for Ireland, with power as vacancies should occur to reduce the hierarchy, from four archbishops and eighteen bishops, to two archbishops having £12,000. and £8,000. a-year, and ten bishops to receive from £8,000. to £4,000. each. The actual revenues however are still much above these amounts, and are received, be it remembered, in the midst of an indigent community, widely differing in religious persuasion.

By the same Act first-fruits were abolished, and the large surplus arising from suppressed sees, from suspended sinecure benefices in the gift of the crown, and from other sources, was made applicable to the augmentation of small livings, providing places of worship, &c. &c. This surplus has been laid out as intended, amounting in the whole to nearly *two millions sterling*, and the expense of the commission, which still subsists, has been £140,000.

A combination having been formed against the payment of tithes, in 1832 a tithe-composition was introduced, still payable by the tenant; but the burden on the poor Roman catholic occupiers had become intolerable. A fierce agitation was ex-

¹ See Companion to Almanac, 1834.

cited and six years after, when the commutation measure was enacted, the charge was removed from the tenants and made compulsory on the landlords, who were conciliated by a reduction of one-fourth, in consequence of greater security and ease in the collection—a very reasonable ground for abatement, which had not been at all admitted in England.

The Irish rent-charge is now returned as £482,000. per annum, of which the inappropriate part is £81,859., or about one-sixth. The parochial glebes are in addition, and very large, being estimated at nearly £100,000. a-year. The great increase in the value of land contributed much in the last century to the opulence of the Irish church. "Ministers' money" is levied by assessment on the inhabitants of all denominations in some of the towns, and is computed to produce about £10,500. a-year. The present government has announced an intention to abolish this charge. Of the 1456 benefices or livings returned in 1831, the yearly value of one was £2800.; of ten others upwards of £2000. each; of twenty upwards of £1500.; of seventy-one more upwards of £1000. each; of 222 £600. and upwards, and of 281 £400. and upwards. In some the stipends were represented to be very low.¹ The bishops have "the right of presentation" to a majority of the Irish livings, and the lay patrons are fewer than in England. Some doubt exists whether tithes were established through the whole of Ireland before the time of Elizabeth.

It must be stated, in justice to the parochial ministers of the Irish established church, that many of them are philanthropic men, earnest in their endeavours to improve the condition, temporal and spiritual, of the population around them, and that the charge of the poor-rates has fallen heavily on them, as it also has on the landlords. The present levying of the tithe rent-charge on the latter, instead of on the tenants as formerly, has proved a great relief to the poor occupiers, their rent having been already too high to admit of an increase.

Two thousand seven hundred and thirty-six Irish tithe-owners made application to the British Government for relief on account of arrears, from 1831 to 1833, amounting to £818,000.; of which the sum of £187,300. was applied for by 623 impro priators. One million sterling was granted by Parliament for this purpose down to 1840; £750,000. for building episcopal places of worship, and £741,000. for their charter schools: the

¹ See Return to Parliament in 1833, No. 265.

last two to 1829 only.¹ At the very time when these claims were urgently preferred, most of the dignitaries of the Irish state church were encumbered with wealth, and the offices of many were mere sinecures.

Wade, in his "Unreformed Abuses," taking Ward's statement in the House of Commons in 1844, computes the total revenue as follows :—

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| Archbishops and Bishops | £151,127 |
| Deans and Prebends | 84,481 |
| Minor Canons and Vicars Choral | 10,525 |
| Total episcopal and cathedral | <u>£196,133</u> |
| Parochial tithes | £486,785 |
| Episcopal tithes | 9,515 |
| Dignitaries' tithes | 24,360 |
| Total of tithes | 520,660 |
| Add episcopal and cathedral revenues | <u>196,133</u> |
| Total revenue of the Irish church | <u>£716,793</u> |

William Howitt and J.T. Leader in 1832 estimated the amount at £1,986,604. Pebrer, in 1833, following Moreau and late Parliamentary returns, computed the entire receipts at about £1,300,000. per annum, and those of all other denominations, though many times more numerous, at £264,000. Lord Althorp estimated the amount in 1833 as not exceeding £800,000.

The annual revenues of the established church of Ireland have been returned as follows since 1833 :—

| | |
|--|-----------------|
| Archiepiscopal and episcopal endowments ² | £151,128 |
| Corporate revenues (Deans, Canons, &c.) ³ | 57,106 |
| Tithe rent-charge | 401,000 |
| Glebe lands | 92,000 |
| Ministers' money | 10,300 |
| Dublin University, &c. &c. ⁴ | 100,000 |
| Other ecclesiastical resources | 50,000 |
| Total | <u>£861,534</u> |

¹ See Return to Parliament.—Companion to Almanac, 1841.

² First Report on Ecclesiastical Revenues, Ireland.

³ Second Report on Ecclesiastical Revenues.—Companion to Almanac.

⁴ The students at Trinity College, Dublin, are said to be about 830.

About a Million Sterling in round numbers may be a fair computation of the annual revenues of the Irish church establishment at the present time. If the ecclesiastical expenses of the other religious bodies were equally great in proportion to their numbers, the whole charges on the people for such purposes would be about six millions a-year!

In the taking of that large income from the Roman catholics, and its present enjoyment mainly by a few protestant ecclesiastics, in the midst of overwhelming poverty and wretchedness, is presented a melancholy and sickening picture, which has been stigmatized, as was likely, by very hard epithets.¹ Yet the proposed appropriation clause of the Act of 1833, by which it was designed to apply a small surplus of about £250,000. a-year out of the revenues to educational and other civil purposes, was met with general cries of sacrilege and spoliation, and was obliged to be abandoned. When will things be called by their right names? The established church, being in unison with the sentiments of so few, cannot fairly be termed a national church.

“Church-cess” in Ireland, similar to the English “church-rate,” and amounting to about £80,000. annually, was abolished by the Act of 1833. First-fruits were also extinguished by the same Act.

There are several circumstances connected with the established church of Ireland which render it a cause of especial heart-burning and irritation. The ecclesiastical emoluments and other property formerly in the possession of the Roman catholics were forcibly taken from them. These still constitute the great bulk of the nation, while those who now enjoy the proceeds are only a very small minority. The proceeds themselves are very ill divided among the bishops and ministers of the few; some of them being gorged with riches, and many of them having little or no service to perform. The Roman catholics have to support their own hierarchy in addition, and at considerable cost. Till very lately they were subject to vexatious penalties, and denied a participation in civil privileges—the right of all peaceable subjects. Even now their humbler classes are treated by many protestants with unchristian aversion and hauteur. These are serious impediments in the way of their embracing the protes-

¹ The average rate of men’s wages appears to have been from 6*d.* to 10*d.* per day, in Ireland, till very recently.

tant faith. The abolition of the church establishment is essential to cure most of these evils, and would go far, with the blessing of the Most High, to produce this happy result.

2nd Section.—The Irish Roman Catholic church.

In treating here and elsewhere on the position of Roman catholicism in reference to the state, it may be observed that the main object of this work is, not to discuss and expose the errors of Romanism—great as all protestants must believe them to be, nor of any other denomination; but to consider the question of the treatment of each religious body by the civil authority, and to deal candidly and fairly with each in a spirit of Christian good will. To their own master they must stand or fall.

The Roman catholic hierarchy of Ireland, for four millions of its people, is represented¹ to consist at present of four archbishops and twenty-three bishops, nominated by the pope; of forty-six deans and archdeacons, appointed by the cardinal protector at Rome; and of 2,145 parochial priests, chosen by the bishops. The whole of these ecclesiastics are supported, not by the mere voluntary contributions of their flocks, to be withheld at pleasure, but by regular payments required by the principles of the Roman catholic faith. “Easter and Christmas offerings” must be made; prayers for the living, extreme unction for the dying, masses for the dead, must be had and paid for. With astonishing confidence, the priests contend, that all these payments are to be made for the sake of the giver, or of those for whom they are given; not for the sake of the priest and for his support, which is represented to be but an incidental and a secondary object! The catholic pays, and his payments are held to be essential, not for the priest, but to save his own soul, or the souls of those whom he loved, from purgatory—not for a sustentation fund, but for his own or their salvation! The duty of these payments is an essential part of the Roman catholic religion; and whether that religion is endowed or unendowed—whether they are compelled to pay to the ministers of another church or not, the payments to their own priests must be made. But it is obvious that while poor and dependent, the influence

¹ Laing's German Catholic Church.

of the priests is in some respects less, and their tone lower, than if they stood in a more authoritative position, backed by the arm of the law. The imposition of the protestant church establishment is the great national grievance, and the complaint must be acknowledged to be well founded.

The propriety of endowing the Irish Roman catholic priests was suggested by some high protestant authorities in 1845,¹ and the sum of £250,000. per annum was thought necessary for the purpose. One main object doubtless was to remove the existing appearance of sectarian partiality, and to furnish some excuse or show of reason for maintaining the protestant episcopal establishment. Happily, however, the Romish church preferred at that time to remain independent of the state, and many zealous protestants warmly opposed the scheme, which consequently fell to the ground. To take the amount from the opulent state church for any other purpose whatever, it was contended would be spoliation; but to preserve the present application, though in the midst of destitution and starvation, was accounted no spoliation at all. It is not by an addition or a division of endowments, which would but perpetuate an anti-christian system; but by annulling all state provisions, that the present unjust state of things can be rectified, that true religion will be best promoted, and the ancient discontent and irritation fairly removed. This may be pronounced to be the only equitable and scriptural principle on which the "difficulties" of the sister country can be finally remedied.

To state or even to estimate the annual incomes of the Irish Roman catholic priests, would be a point of great difficulty. So many small fees are required even from the poor, and so many large contributions from the wealthy, that the whole amount though hidden must be very considerable. Since the general prevalence of distress in 1836 and 1837, the receipts of the priests have been much diminished, as well as their influence over the people, who found the protestants at that awful crisis their best friends. Were the Irish church establishment abolished, the Roman catholic ministers would lose a strong ground of sympathy and of appeal to their hearers. The "religious equality," which they often profess to desire, would not probably, if real in its operation, satisfy them long. They would

¹ Quarterly Review, No. 151.

still sigh after the rich temporalities taken at the reformation from their predecessors. Much is it to be desired, however, that this golden apple of unseemly contention and injurious effects may be divided fairly between all parties, by an application to educational, charitable and civil purposes!—that there may be a real civil equality, and no domination of either religious class!

3rd Section.—Maynooth College.

The Irish Roman catholic college of Maynooth, for the education of priests, has long been supported by the British government. The main reason alleged for that support has been, to provide the means of education at home for the students, and to prevent the necessity of their being exposed abroad to anti-British, and even to infidel principles. This reason operated with special force in 1795, when the first grant of £8,000. was made by the Irish parliament, to aid in erecting the college; the bias and influence of the young priests educated on the continent being then found to be very pernicious. The grants have since been repeated almost every year, and have gradually increased to nearly £30,000. per annum.

The continued support of the college by the state is said to have been a condition of assent to the union of the two nations in 1801, and as such distinctly held out to the Roman catholic body; being accepted by them on the faith of government, and on the implied pledge of parliament. The Act of Union does not however clearly confirm this view, but refers generally to objects of improvement and charity, which were to be supported for twenty years.

Maynooth College was a state establishment, originating in motives of state expediency, as a matter of political compromise. In 1845, the imperial legislature, acting on the same motives, and being anxious at that time to conciliate the catholic priesthood, granted a charter of incorporation to the college, endowed its officers and professors with moderate salaries, and settled sufficient means of support for the students, to be paid out of the consolidated fund, instead of being voted annually as before. It also voted a sum not to exceed £30,000., for building and enlarging the premises; visitors being appointed by the crown,

to inspect the institution and to report annually. The amount for 1850 was £26,360. This parliamentary grant has of late years been the subject of repeated strong remonstrances; many sincere protestants being utterly opposed to any application of the public money for inculcating the gross doctrines of Romanism. The number of students is considerable; but their appearance and the state of the institution are said to be indifferent, and the literary instruction appears to be by no means of the first class.¹

4th Section.—New Educational Colleges.

These, not being of a sectarian or an ecclesiastical character, have been made, on that very account, the subject of severe censure and contest, in the same manner as the elementary schools for both catholics and protestants under the National Board of Education. These schools are said to be about 4800 in number, educating half a million of scholars. In 1845 an Act was passed, granting the sum of £100,000. to the commissioners of public works, in order to the erecting one or more new colleges in Ireland, for the advancement of learning; also a sum not exceeding £21,000. annually, for defraying the stipends of the presidents, vice-presidents, professors of faculties and other officials.

This Act has been to a large extent carried into effect; but, the principle of the foundation being of a liberal and comprehensive character, and not specially subservient to the interests of either protestantism or Romanism, the colleges have been a topic of much vituperation, and have not hitherto received sufficient support or encouragement to make them fully successful. The value of the institution will require time and good management for its development, in a country torn by religious contentions, and where the largest number object to the general introduction of the Holy Scriptures.

5th Section.—The Regium Donum.

The *regium donum*, or royal bounty to the Irish presbyterians, is an ancient annual endowment, commencing as early as 1699;

¹ Castlereagh Correspondence, Eclectic Review, 1852.

when William III. granted by his letters patent to seven presbyterian ministers and to their successors, the sum of £1200., to be paid to them annually *during pleasure*, for the use of the presbyterian ministers of the north of Ireland. The grant was renewed by Queen Anne, in 1702, with but little variation. In 1784, George III., on being assured of their zeal for his person and government, gave them an additional allowance of £1000. a-year; and in consequence of an address from the Irish House of Commons in 1792, the sum of £3729. 16s. 10d. per annum was granted "during pleasure," to be distributed among the "Irish non-conforming ministers of the north," at the discretion of the Lord Lieutenant. With the view of obtaining their concurrence in the union with England, a large addition was made to the grant in 1801. Down to 1803 it was divided equally; but from that time the sum, being about £20,000., was apportioned among them in three classes, at the rate of £100., £75., and £50. annually to each individual, on condition that each congregation raises not less than £35. a year. Smaller sums were allotted to the seceders, and the agent was allowed about £350. a year for making the distribution. It was discovered, in 1850, that the agent had been dishonest, and had retained a large share for himself.¹

From a return made in 1847, it appears that the ministers of 451 presbyterian congregations then partook of the fund, re-

¹ Another *regium donum* of small amount has long subsisted in England, being originally bestowed by George I. in 1723, on dissenting ministers of the three denominations, presbyterians, independents, and baptists, with their widows. The first grant was £500. a year; the design being in this case, as in that of the Irish bounty, to secure the good will and influence of the dissenters. The sum was soon afterwards increased to £700., and it is now annually voted by parliament, amounting to about £5000. yearly for "protestant dissenting ministers, French refugee clergymen, &c." These are the chief recipients of the fund at the present time.* In 1850 it was stated at £7359. Objections have been repeatedly made by dissenters, both in and out of parliament, to the repetition of the vote, and very few partake of the bounty.

"The Consul Act, which empowers the Treasury to give yearly allowance to episcopal or presbyterian ministers of British congregations on the continent, requires the hearers to pay a sum equal to the allowance."—See *Matthews' Report*.

* Buck's *Theological Dictionary* and *National Finance Reports*.

ceiving besides on an average about £40 a year as pew-rents from their hearers, computed with children at 432,250 persons. Some of the present receivers are understood to be unitarians, having forsaken the orthodox principles of those for whom it was first intended.

A striking exemplification of the ill effect of endowments, or grants by the state for religious purposes, is afforded by this small fund. Many of the congregations, relying upon it, have become very backward and niggardly in their own contributions, and limit themselves, though wealthy, to the bare sum of £35. required by the government. Even of this the people pay in some cases but £20., the remaining £15. being allowed to be made up by a free manse or private endowment. So that “while, in the commonest hedge or infant school, the children give each a penny a week; these presbyterian ministers, for affording religious instruction, do not receive from their people at the rate of even *one farthing a week!* Three small presbyterian bodies in Ulster accept no royal bounty, and their congregations pay more than double the average stipend of the endowed class!”¹ This contrast clearly shows the chilling, pauperising effect of provisions and endowments by the state, for sacred objects beyond its legitimate province.

6th Section.—General Remarks.

The unreasonable imposition of the Protestant episcopal church on Roman catholic Ireland has been felt, even by many of its supporters, to be a gross outrage on just and equal policy. By way of a counterpoise, some appearance of fair dealing, by measures in favour of the Roman catholics and of protestant dissenters, was felt to be necessary.

This idea, and a desire to quiet and conciliate the leading members of these two bodies, were doubtless the motives which led to the grant for Maynooth College, and to the *regium donum*. They were designed as props to the established Irish church, the position of which was felt to be morally like an

¹ See report of George Matthews, appointed by the government to investigate the case, contained, with much other valuable information, in the tracts of “the British Anti-State Church Association.”

inverted pyramid, in danger of being quickly upset without the application of supports, granting favour to the other religious bodies. It may be said that there is no moral equality in the character of the doctrines upheld by these several institutions. The difference however—great as are the errors of Romanism—may be thought by some to be more in degree than in principle ; and all are presumed to be conscientioualy maintained by those who profess them, however we must lament the prevalence of error. The Irish endowments will probably all stand or fall together ; the most anomalous procedure of the three being to enforce on six millions of people a church, which five millions entirely disapprove of. The grants to Roman catholic students and to dissenting ministers are comparatively mere trifles ; some of the protestant dignitaries being at the same time loaded to repletion with the wealth of their endowments !

In the forced expulsion of the Romish ecclesiastics, in the imposition of the protestant hierarchy on an averse and discontented people, and in the animosities which have ever since been kindled by the measure, is presented a striking example of the evils of state interference in such matters, greatly deteriorating the civil as well as the religious condition of a nation !

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE CHURCHES OF SCOTLAND ; THEIR PROGRESS AND CONSTITUTIONS.

AN eminent political leader is said to have declared several years ago, that “the battle of religious establishments must be fought in Scotland;” and it may be said that the conflict has been maintained in that country for more than three centuries, with very varied results.

The principles of the reformation were first introduced into Scotland in 1527, and for a long period great cruelties were perpetrated on their professors, through the jealousy of the Romish priests. Those principles however took deep root. Knox and Melville bringing with them from Geneva the presbyterian polity, which had been adopted in that city, it became finally established. The first General Assembly was held in 1560, and the original Act of Settlement was passed in 1592.

1st Section.—Presbyterian Discipline.

The government of the Scotch established, or presbyterian church, is conducted by ministers and ruling elders or presbyters. There are also deacons, but their sole office is to take care of the poor. Every parish—and there are nearly a thousand—has its minister, nominated by the patron, but called or elected professedly or really by the members of the parochial church. It has also two or three lay or ruling elders, being heads of families, appointed for their orthodoxy and exemplary conduct, by the imposition of the hands of the minister and other elders. These are equal in authority, and together form a kirk-session in each parish for the discipline of the church. All the ministers, and one ruling elder from every parish within a district, compose a presbytery. The several presbyteries in each province

constitute a provincial synod, and of these there are fifteen, which meet twice every year. The highest authority is vested in the General Assembly of the nation, consisting of a certain number of ministers and elders delegated from each presbytery, together with commissioners from the Scotch Universities and royal boroughs. The Lord High Commissioner, the Queen's representative, presides over the General Assembly with great splendour, having a salary of £1500. a-year; but he has no voice in the proceedings. One of the ministers is chosen moderator or speaker, and on questions purely religious there is no appeal to a higher authority. The assembly meets annually for about ten days, and is open to the public with tickets. It is composed of several hundred members, the majority being ministers, and the remainder elders, representing 972 parishes.¹

The crown has the power of patronage, or of nominating ministers, in 302 of the parishes, the privy council in 60, the aristocracy or landholders in 587,² and other private persons or colleges in 23. This claim to patronage was recognized in the original Act of Constitution, and it has long been the chief cause of contention between the two great religious parties, viz. the moderates or high-church, but low-doctrine men, who are the advocates of patronage, on the one hand; and the evangelicals, high Calvinists or non-intrusionists, on the other. In leading doctrines they mostly accord, varying chiefly in degree.

There can be little doubt that in the primitive apostolic age the terms bishop or overseer, and presbyter or elder, were but different names for ministers who held the same office; and that all were chosen by the voice of the assembled church. A notion soon followed, that bishops were ministers or clergy of a superior order, deriving their authority from divine right, and by outward succession to the apostles; but that elders were laymen only, without any such right or succession, and holding ministerial authority merely by the appointment of the people. Hence the system of the episcopacy was considered aristocratic or monarchical, and that of the presbytery popular and democratic, each having its respective supporters. The Scotch presbyterian church has always rejected the idea of apostolical succession.

¹ Buck's Theological Dictionary.

² This is a very large proportion.

*2nd Section.—Progress of the Scotch Established Church, and
Origin of the Secession Churches.*

James VI. desired to support episcopacy as most consonant with monarchy, on the ground of his own maxim, “No bishop, no king,” and after he ascended the English throne he succeeded, with some difficulty, in establishing bishops in Scotland. Charles I. proceeded in the same course, attempting to assimilate the Scotch and English churches in all respects, and to introduce a liturgy, which till then had never been regularly used in Scotland. By these measures he excited a general storm of violent opposition. In 1638 the people bound themselves by a new instrument called “the solemn league and covenant,” to exterminate prelacy as a corruption of the Gospel; they met the king’s troops with force of arms, and took a prominent part in those measures of resistance, which ended in the death of Charles and the erection of the Commonwealth. The church quickly shook off the control of the state, though it still grasped the temporalities, and employed the civil power to persecute those who dissented. Patronage, or the claim to present ministers, was abolished in 1649.

Soon after the restoration of the monarchy, Charles II., by his royal proclamation, altered the form of church government in Scotland in 1661, and re-established the bishops with great pomp, also the rights of patrons, in opposition to the strong and general feeling of the Scotch.

The presbyterian ministers were now generally displaced, and succeeded by bishops and episcopal “clergy,” many of whom were unfit for the charge, and of careless, dissolute habits. Some of those who had been ejected, were put to death for the fearless maintenance of their profession, and others underwent severe persecutions. The conduct of the episcopal party resembled that of foreign inquisitors, rather than of British protestants. The people, however, generally continued to adhere to their principles. On the accession of King William, the bishops, taking the high ground of the “non-jurors,” and objecting to transfer their allegiance to him, were suppressed altogether; when presbytery was at length fully established, and ratified by act of parliament in 1690, to the great satisfaction of

the nation. The sittings of the General Assembly were now renewed, after a suspension of nearly forty years, and the right of patronage again abolished. By the treaty of union under Queen Anne in 1707, it was mutually agreed that episcopacy should continue in England, and presbytery in Scotland. The established religion in one country is therefore a species of dissent in the other; the British monarch, by a singular anomaly, being the head of both!

Dr. Chalmers, while a member of the Scotch presbyterian establishment, thus compared the two:—"Instead of possessing any such securities, [alluding to the Corporation and Test Acts of England] we ourselves were objects of jealousy to the English hierarchy, and thrust along with its general body of sectarians, to an outfield place beyond the limits of her guarded enclosure. We, in the midst of disabilities, have stood and prospered; and though wanting her artificial protections, we yet outpeer her in the love and reverence of the population."¹

When patronage, as already mentioned, had been annulled in Scotland in 1690, on the establishment of presbytery, a compensation of 600 marks or £35. was assigned to each of the claimants; but in 1711, only twenty-one years afterwards, on the plea of insufficient amends made to the patrons, and of great heats and divisions, the patronage system, with liberty to the congregations to express disapproval, was re-enacted by the British parliament, to the great discontent of the Scotch. Protests were presented against it year after year, but the assembly and the patrons becoming more and more absolute, all these remonstrances were in vain.

In 1733, under Ebenezer Erskine, a minister of independent character, a considerable secession from the established church took place, on the ground of the patronage, of the departure from primitive simplicity, and of the power assumed by the General Assembly. The new body was termed, "the Scotch Secession Church." In 1747, this body subdivided into two parts, "the Burghers and Anti-burghers," on account of a burgess oath, by which the person swore to maintain the religion by law established. Each of these divisions again split on the power of the civil magistrate in religious matters. Most of them objected to the principle of connexion with the state, and

¹ Chalmers' Life, vol. iii.

all of them adhere to the doctrines of the "Westminster confession" of 1647, held by the established church of Scotland. On the recent abolition of the Burgher Oath, they generally coalesced under the name of "the United Scotch Secession Church." All their ministers are supported by free contributions, and attend their General Assembly.

Notwithstanding these evidences of dissatisfaction, the system of the established body underwent no relaxation, and many appointments were made without regard to the spiritual wants of the parishes. High Calvinistic notions of election and reprobation have not proved a very favourable soil for the growth of Christian forbearance and charity. Robertson, the moderator and well-known historian, took a leading part in arbitrary measures. Great apathy and deadness now prevailed for a very long period in the Scotch church, and discontent continued. The settlement of the presbyterian establishment was further guaranteed by the fifth article of the union with Ireland in 1801.

At length, in 1834, the General Assembly, assuming more authority to itself, promoted, under what was termed the "scheme of church extension," the erection of a large number of new places of worship, with the privilege to their ministers of sitting and voting in the general body, and with the presumption that the state would provide the means for their support. The Assembly also enacted that a minister should be set aside, though nominated by the legal patron, if the major part of the male heads of families, who were full members of the church, joined in objecting, or in giving forth a veto against his appointment; thus acting on the principle termed "non-intrusion." The general effects of these measures are said to have been good—more zeal for religion was excited, and many new churches were established.

A case however occurred in the same year, which brought to the test the power of the assembly. The living of a parish being vacant, the patron insisted on introducing his nominee, though 280 members of the church objected to him, and only three were in his favour. The presbytery, the synod, and the General Assembly all decided against him; but a civil tribunal, the Court of Session, reversed the whole; the conclusions of the Assembly were declared null and void, and the minister was forced upon

the parish. In another instance, in 1837, the presbytery, as well as the Court of Session, urged the appointment of a pastor; one member only being favourable to him, and 260 others, as well as the rest of the church judicatories, against him. The minister was inducted under painful opposition. A great struggle now arose between the civil and ecclesiastical courts, the supporters of each being resolute in their determination. Thus the injudicious and resolute exercise of the power of patronage by two or three individuals, gradually produced effects which involved the whole Scotch establishment in conflict. The question itself must be admitted to be one of great importance to many other professing churches.

At the General Assembly of 1838, the decisions of the civil courts being brought forward, the question was opened up between the church and the state, when a majority of forty-one, consisting of the "Evangelical party," decided to assert, at all hazards, the authority and jurisdiction of the church, and to maintain the right of the veto in the congregations. Large and enthusiastic meetings were held, many of the people shared in the feeling, the nation was greatly agitated, and at the assembly in 1842, a resolution was adopted, denouncing the judgments of the civil courts as encroachments, and claiming rights for the church in such matters; a memorial was also agreed on, calling on the queen to abolish altogether the system of patronage. Both these measures were however in vain,—the Imperial Parliament confirmed the judgments of the civil courts, and decided that the veto act of the Assembly in 1834 was illegal and null.¹ One step led to another, and a special convocation of Scotch ministers being summoned, they resolved that the church should maintain her independence, and if necessary, relinquish her union with the state.

3rd Section.—Establishment of the Free Church.

At the General Assembly in 1843 a long and decided protest was read, from the dissatisfied evangelical ministers and elders, against the decision of the government, as an infringement of the rights of Scotland, by her constitution and by the Act of Union. Immediately after this, the moderator himself (Dr.

¹ See Auchterarder Case in the Report of the House of Lords, 1839.

Welsh), and about 300 ministers and elders withdrew from the assembly in silence and with deep emotion, and proceeded in order, amid the acclamations of the people, to another building, where they organized the National Free Church of Scotland. Dr. Chalmers, who, though a zealous advocate for the union of church and state, probably had not foreseen the extremity to which these proceedings were likely to lead, was chosen the first moderator of the New Assembly. An Act of demission was prepared and executed, by which 474 seceding ministers relinquished their stipends, their manses, and other pastoral endowments, amounting together to upwards of £100,000. a-year, or an average of £210. each. About 2000 elders are stated to have joined in the secession, the whole being a full half of the office-bearers in the national church, and carrying with them about one-half of its "members, in full communion" or membership.

The claim of patronage is obviously one of the fruits of that connection with the state, by which the most sacred concerns and rights of a church are surrendered to the determination of the civil authority, in consideration of the guarantee of certain civil privileges. Emancipated from this serfdom, the Scotch church might have regulated its affairs according to its own judgment of Christian principle and duty. There is, however, some reason to apprehend that the seceding party really wished the state to be subservient, and took ground quite as high in some respects as that held by the body from which they withdrew.

Great personal sacrifices were involved in these steps. The ministers and their families had at once to quit their manses or parsonage houses, and find shelter where they could: they had to preach for a time in barns or sheds, in ravines or in the open fields; but a sentiment of duty and a general zeal animated both them and the people, so that about one-third only of the whole population is said to have remained with the established church. Strenuous efforts were made by the seceding party to raise contributions, and 600 free places of worship were soon erected, the whole sum contributed within three years at home and abroad being upwards of a million sterling. Of this amount, part was expended on new buildings for worship, and part was invested as a capital, the interest of which, and the free

contributions of the people, provide for the maintenance of the ministers. These are said to be about 1500 in number, and to have received in one year £81,000. from the fund, and £20,000. more from collections; the incomes of most of the leaders being very nearly equal to their former stipends. Thus, notwithstanding the assumed name of "free," they have not fulfilled the command of our Lord to "give freely," nor followed the apostolic example, to "labour with their own hands" in some honest calling.

Here it must be especially remarked that, in both these Scotch churches, the ministers retain a preponderance of votes ; and that in both, the old notions and habits of ascendancy and self-importance, natural to an establishment, still exert a powerful influence. In their celebrated protest, the evangelical or Free Church party "firmly assert" what they conceive to be "the right and duty of the civil magistrate, to maintain and support an establishment of religion;" claiming the liberty, for themselves and their successors, "to strive by all lawful means to secure the performance of this duty;" but acknowledging that they are not at liberty to retain the benefits, while they "cannot comply with the conditions." Thus after all, interesting as the struggle is, the object contended for was but partial and incomplete—by no means a denial of the principle of state support till forced upon them, but merely a resolution, apparently not very fair and reasonable, to be free from its control on the subject of the appointment of ministers.¹

The retention of such views does not convey a bright promise of spiritual-mindedness ; and accordingly, a corrupt system of vieing with the established kirk in the erection of handsome places of worship, and courting popular favour by outward grandeur and eloquent oratory, is still at work, and is greatly to be lamented, as evidence of a worldly spirit. A holy emulation in maintaining the purity and simplicity of the gospel worship and ministry, and in doing good to the bodies and souls of men, would be more worthy of Christian churches and their ministers !

¹ D'Aubigné's Scotland, &c. ; Noel's Essay ; Buck's Theolog. Dict., &c.

4th Section.—Revenues of the Established Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

The whole income of the ministers of the kirk was estimated in 1755 at about £68,500., and their number at 944; hence each received on an average about £72. a-year.¹

The ministers of the presbyterian Scotch establishment are now stated to amount to 1105. Their income is derived chiefly from teinds or tithes, which are often paid partly in money and partly in victuals, as oatmeal or barley. By an Act of Parliament passed in 1810, the sum of £10,000. per annum was granted to increase the stipends of the poorer ministers to not less than £150. each; and down to 1839 total grants of £367,591. had been so appropriated. A small sum, about £8. 6s. 8d., is usually allowed for what are termed "communion elements," besides a manse or parsonage, and a glebe of six or seven acres of land, with some other minor privileges. The whole income of a few of the livings appears to range from £500. to £700. a-year each. The entire cost of the Scotch ecclesiastical establishment is supposed not to exceed at present £300,000. per annum; which sum, if divided between 1105 ministers, would give an average of £270. for each, including the expenses of divine worship, &c.² Pluralities and non-residence have of later times been abolished.

The teinds or tithes of the established ministers of Scotland are not, like the rent-charge of the Anglican church, regulated by a seven years' average of the prices of corn, but fluctuate every year according to the medium price for the previous year alone—a plan which is said to subject their income to great and inconvenient variations.

A government grant of £50,000. was made in 1825, for erecting edifices for the national worship in the highlands and islands of Scotland. A drawback of £17,456. was also allowed down to 1839 on the building materials.³

¹ Baptist W. Noel's Essay.

² Buck's Theological Dictionary.

³ See Parliamentary Returns.

5th Section.—General Notices.

The Established Church is represented to have 16 synods, 83 presbyteries, and about 974 parishes; but to number less than a third of the entire population as its members.

The Free Church consists of 17 synods and 71 presbyteries, with a larger and more wealthy body of members, at present, than either of the two other great divisions. Its affairs are conducted much on the same system as that of the established church, patronage excepted.

The United Secession Church has about 500 congregations, extending through the country, and comprehending many of the most liberal-minded, philanthropic and active members of the middle class. The population belonging to its various branches is estimated at about 350,000.¹

There are also a few Episcopalians, Baptists, Independents, Methodists, Friends, &c.

To the credit of the Scotch churches generally, it must be noted that membership or communion is in general well defined and maintained, and that moral delinquency is commonly visited with a privation of church privileges. However deficient they may be in some respects, the several churches do to a large extent govern themselves, elect their officers, and manage their own affairs. The evils of the system of patronage are therefore felt more sensibly by them, and more easily corrected than in England, where there is little or no discipline over the private members of the established church.

¹ Penny Cyclopædia.

CHAPTER XXX.

CONSTITUTIONS OF ANGLO-SAXON STATES AND CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA.

Most of the European governments were originally founded in times of barbarism and ignorance, before the general diffusion of Christianity. Many of their principles were derived from heathen or Jewish sources. Brute force and dark superstition furnished quotas to their constitutions. In process of time, the feudal and the papal systems contributed largely. Priestly authority exercised a powerful influence on public affairs.¹ We therefore rarely find in the old world instances of complete liberty and equality in civil and religious matters. It was however on this great principle, that the Anglo-Saxon governments in several parts of the new world were professed to be settled, in times of great inquiry, conflict and intelligence. To that interesting field then we must chiefly look, for the practical development of constitutional liberty, and especially liberty of conscience. Nothing less was to be expected from men who had suffered so severely from an exclusive system. The sources of information on this head are scanty; but a rapid glance at several of the British Colonies will tend to throw light on the subject.

1st Section.—Virginia.

The earliest settlements of Englishmen on the American shores took place, about the year 1607, on that part called Virginia; where the colonists, being strict episcopalians, fixed the form of religion according to the doctrines and rites of the established church of England.

In 1621, a representative constitution was introduced; the company of proprietors ordered 100 acres of land in each of the

¹ See a Dissertation on Canon and Feudal Law, by John Adams.

boroughs to be laid off for a glebe, and £200. sterling to be raised for a living by each parish. The stipend was settled by the yearly appropriation to each minister of a large quantity of tobacco and corn, valued at £200. There were then only five ministers in the colony.¹

The Assembly passed an Act in 1643, "to preserve purity and unity of doctrine and discipline in the church, and the right administration of the sacraments." No minister to be admitted to officiate, except on proof of his ordination by some bishop in England, and on subscription of conformity; otherwise to be silenced and compelled to depart the country. The ancient constitution, having been suspended during the Commonwealth, was restored in 1662, and the church of England was regularly established by the Assembly. Churches were ordered to be built, glebe lands to be laid out, and vestries appointed. Ministers who had been ordained in England were to be inducted by the governor, and all others to be prohibited.

In 1682, report was made that Virginia contained about 14,000 "tithables or working hands." The ecclesiastical livings were then seventy-six or seventy-seven; but the poorness of the country, and the low price of tobacco had reduced the value about one-half. In 1703, the colony contained 60,000 souls, of which number 25,000, being males above sixteen years of age, were subject to tithes by a poll-tax, the remainder being women and children.² Every inhabitant was required, under pain of fine and imprisonment, to contribute to the support of ministers of the episcopal church.

2nd Section.—New England.

This country was first colonized in 1620 by the Pilgrim Fathers, or British settlers at New Plymouth,—being suffering puritans, who had quitted their native land in order to escape persecution for religion, and to establish a united Christian colony. The basis of agreement between the first settlers was this:—to "enact, constitute, and frame such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions and officers from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the

¹ Holmes' Annals of America; John Richardson's Life.

² Ibid.

general good of the colony ;" the emigrants promising thereto "all due subordination and obedience."¹

This however was but a vague outline of their intentions ; it laid down no clear principles of religious or civil liberty ; and they soon enforced with a high hand their own views of religion, persecuting others who held different sentiments. Two episcopalians, who had gone out with them, and had been appointed members of the Council, were treated with much harshness for asserting their own principles, and within a short period were arrested and sent back to England.

"The platform of church discipline," agreed upon by a synod, held at Cambridge in New England in 1646-7 and 8, together with the recognition of many excellent principles, and of "the Westminster confession of faith," contains the following clauses :—If necessary, "the magistrate is to see that the ministry be duly provided for," and "The power of the magistrate extends to the preservation of the peace in matters of moral righteousness, yea, and of godliness too ; so that idolatry, blasphemy, heresy, &c., &c., are to be restrained and punished by him. If any churches grow schismatical, or walk contrary to the rule of the word, the magistrate is to put forth his coercive power, as the matter shall require." This was adopted as the religious constitution of the New England colonies;² and by it a dangerous opening was allowed for state interference in religious matters, to an indefinite extent, subject to the caprice or prejudices of those in authority !

In 1630, a Court held at Charlestown ordered that houses be built and salaries raised for the ministers of religion, at the common charge.

The first synod on the American shore was held at Newtown in New England, in 1637. It condemned, as erroneous, eighty opinions disseminated by Ann Hutchinson. In consequence of this decision and of general intolerance, several dissatisfied inhabitants joined Roger Williams, who had lately settled at Providence.

Persecution was excited against the Friends or Quakers, quickly after their arrival in 1656, when the Court of Massachusetts, "considering them hostile alike to civil and to ecclesiastical order, passed sentence of banishment on twelve of them, being all

¹ Neal's History of the Puritans.

² Ibid. ; Holmes' Annals.

who were then in the colony.”¹ This persecution was carried to such a barbarous extent, that in the years 1659 and 1660 four were hung at Boston for maintaining their religious principles, and many others subjected to ignominious treatment, cruel imprisonment and exile. An order procured from Charles II. put a stop to these antichristian proceedings in 1661;² and the Society soon became numerous, in spite of the fierce opposition it had encountered. The stigma attaching to the puritan New Englanders has proved indelible, and the dangers attending the union of civil and ecclesiastical authority have seldom been more forcibly exemplified.

In 1681, the first episcopal society was established with authority, and the English liturgy enforced at Boston. These were some of the fruits of James II.’s arbitrary rule; on his abdication the country was again governed according to its charters, the surrender of which he had in many cases attempted to gain.³

3rd Section.—Maryland.

This district was colonized about 1632, by papists under Lord Baltimore, to whose memory it is due to acknowledge that he founded a government where liberty was fully assured to persons of all religious persuasions. It must be recorded as the earliest instance in the New World, and most probably in the whole world, of the practical adoption by a Christian government of the great principle of complete liberty of conscience.

The governor declared in his oath, “I will not, by myself or any other, directly or indirectly, molest any person professing to believe in Jesus Christ, in respect of religion.” At the instance of certain puritans however, a temporary exception was made after a course of years, with respect to those who professed the principles of the first founders—popery as well as prelacy. The Friends also were subjected to sufferings for their religious principles. But enlarged views generally characterised the government, persons of all denominations were protected, and as a natural consequence, the colony rapidly advanced in population and prosperity.⁴

¹ Holmes’ Annals.

² Sewell and Gough’s Histories of Friends.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Bowden’s History of Friends in America.

4th Section—*Rhode Island.*

Roger Williams, a puritan minister, “young, godly and zealous,” who went to New England in 1630, being more enlightened and independent than most of his contemporaries, boldly declared that “persecution for cause of conscience is most evidently contrary to the doctrine of Christ.” His tenets were pronounced to be “heretical and seditious, tending equally to sap the foundation of the establishment in church and in state; and being found irreclaimable he was banished the jurisdiction.”¹ After enduring great exposure and suffering, in 1635 he settled on Rhode Island, where he established a new colony on the broad Christian basis of entire religious liberty and equality, naming its capital “Providence,” and declaring his earnest desire that it might prove “a shelter for persons of distressed conscience.” A charter was granted to these colonists in 1643, and one of the articles of the constitution agreed on was, “that none be accounted a delinquent for doctrines,” and that “the magistrate having nothing to do with matters of the first table, but only the second, therefore there should be a general and unlimited toleration for all religions; and that to punish men for matters of conscience was persecution.” This Christian liberality brought upon its author violent reproaches from neighbouring colonies, in some of which presbytery violated the rights of conscience not less than episcopacy had done in Europe. “We have not felt in this colony,” exclaimed the independent Rhode Islanders in 1654, “the iron yoke of wolvish bishops, nor the new chains of the presbyterian tyrants; nor have we been consumed by the over-zealous fire of the (so-called) godly Christian magistrate. We have not known what an excise means; we have almost forgotten what tithes are!”²

The government was however induced to pass a bill in 1665, to outlaw the Friends and seize their estates, for not bearing arms against the Indians; but the people rose and prevented it from being carried into execution.³ The general example of Rhode Island was a noble one in respect to religious liberty, and has ultimately been followed throughout the United States.

¹ Holmes' Annals.

² Bowden's History.

³ Holmes' Annals.

5th Section.—Carolina.

This district was first settled by the English in 1663; and the charter from Charles II. allowed "indulgences and dispensations in religious affairs, as the colonists might think proper."¹ Six years after, the proprietaries sent over a new constitution framed by the celebrated John Locke; an express clause in which granted full freedom to men of every religion,—to Jews, heathens, and dissenters. This "attracted puritans and papists from England, Ireland and Holland, persecuted Huguenots from France, and exiled Covenanters from Scotland." Members of the Society of Friends had already settled in the colony. The constitution was however defective. It recognised negro slavery; the church of England was to be allowed a public maintenance; an order of hereditary nobility was created; and the legislative power was limited to a few.² In consequence of the inconvenience of these and other regulations, it was abandoned by the north in 1680, and by the south in 1693; general religious liberty was however retained.

By an act of the provincial assembly in 1692, the counties were divided into thirty parishes, sixteen of which were supplied with ministers, and provided with livings. An episcopal college was established in the same year, as a seminary for ministers, and for educational purposes. The college was endowed with 20,000 acres of land, and with a revenue derived from a duty of one penny per lb. on tobacco exported. Episcopacy was established in South Carolina in 1704, and an Act was passed by the provincial legislature, requiring all members of the assembly to conform to the religious worship of the church of England, and to receive the Lord's supper according to its rites. An ecclesiastical jurisdiction was also established and vested with arbitrary powers: "money was provided for building churches, land for glebes, and a salary for each rector."³

The government of Georgia was settled in 1732, with liberty of conscience and freedom of worship to all but papists.⁴

¹ Holmes' Annals of America.

² Some of these clauses are said not to have been indited by Locke.

³ Holmes' Annals.

⁴ Ibid.

6th.—*The Jerseys.*

The first settlement of New Jersey was by the Dutch; the colony being finally transferred to British dominion in 1674, when West Jersey was purchased by two members of the Society of Friends for £2000. These subdivided it among many others; and in 1676 the proprietors laid down certain principles of future government. Section 16th declares that "No man or number of men have authority to rule over men's consciences in religious matters;" therefore it is ordained "That no person within the said province shall be, upon any pretence whatever, called in question or punished, either in person, estate or privilege, for the sake of his opinion, faith or worship, in matters of religion, &c." All the inhabitants were to be free from oppression and slavery, and the force of arms was in no case to be employed. Many of the Friends having migrated from England to West Jersey, and settled there with liberty and success, certain members of the same society purchased East Jersey in 1681.¹

An American annalist remarks, that in every town in East Jersey about that time there was a house for public worship, where religious service was performed weekly. They had no laws for maintaining public teachers, but the towns that had them made way within themselves to maintain them. Newark appears to have been the only town having a settled preacher who "followed no other employment." In 1686 a strict law was passed against duels and challenges, and no one was allowed to go armed with sword, pistol or dagger, on penalty of £5.²

Both colonies became a secure and favourite retreat for those who were oppressed in England and Scotland, and desirous to live in peace. James II. attempted to deprive the colony of its charter, which was at length surrendered to the crown, and the two provinces were united in 1702 under the government of Lord Cornbury.

¹ Bowden's History, &c.

² Holmes' Annals.

7th Section.—New York.

This country, termed by the Dutch New Netherlands, was finally assigned to the British by the treaty of Westminster in 1674, when the Duke of York, afterwards James II., obtained a new patent for it from the king, and called it after his own title. The first assembly after the revolution was held in 1691, and passed an Act that no person, professing faith in God by Jesus Christ, should be disturbed or questioned for different opinions in religion, he not disturbing the public peace; the professors of the Romish religion being excepted. The same liberty of conscience was extended by charter to Massachusetts in 1692, and with the like exception. The episcopal church was first introduced into New York in 1693, when the assembly passed an Act for settling and maintaining a ministry.¹

8th Section.—Pennsylvania.

In 1681 a grant was made to William Penn, by royal charter, of a large tract of land near the Delaware, which was named Pennsylvania, after his father Admiral Penn. The motives of William Penn in soliciting the grant and planting the colony, are said to have been three-fold: the first was, to establish entire liberty of conscience, and thus to provide a safe shelter and peaceful abode for the people of his own and other persuasions, who were distressed on account of religion; the second, to furnish a sound example and "holy experiment" of enlightened polity and good government, founded on Christian principles; and the third, to promote the civilization and conversion of the Indian natives, by measures of righteousness and religious intercourse.

In his outline of the frame of government he says, "I do for me and mine declare and establish, for the first fundamental of the government of my province, that every person residing therein shall enjoy the free possession of his or her faith and exercise of worship towards God, in such manner as every such person shall in conscience believe is most acceptable to God. And so long as every such person useth not this Christian liberty

¹ Holmes' Annals.

to the destruction of others or to licentiousness, he or she shall be protected in the enjoyment of the aforesaid Christian liberty by the civil magistrate."

The charter which he granted to the colony in 1701 breathed the same impartial and comprehensive spirit. "No person confessing the one Almighty and Eternal God to be the Creator, Upholder and Ruler of the world, and holding himself obliged to live peaceably and justly under civil government, shall be in any case molested or prejudiced in person or estate, for his conscientious persuasion or practice, or be compelled at any time to frequent any religious worship, place or ministry, or to do or suffer any other act or thing, contrary to his religious persuasion." All such as professed faith in Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, and who had not been "convicted of ill fame, or unsober and dishonest conversation," were to be capable of being electors, members of the provincial council or general assembly, and officers of the government. The people were vested with authority.

Founded and conducted on these enlightened Christian principles, the government could scarcely fail to succeed; and, as a natural consequence, Pennsylvania soon became populous and the people flourishing, as his biographer remarks, "almost beyond conjecture, and certainly beyond former precedent."¹ Eighty years after its settlement, the territory is said to have had more white inhabitants, though settled later, than any other English colony on the continent, New England alone excepted.

It was a favourite maxim of this illustrious man, that good citizens were of still more importance to a country than a good civil constitution, and that without the former the latter could not be maintained. Hence he enacted laws for the right education of the young, for the encouragement of virtue, and provided for the reformation as well as the punishment of offenders; but jealously guarding against any infringement of the rights of religious liberty, which he determined in his charter to be "one of those laws which were never to be changed."²

Locke is said to have candidly acknowledged that the constitution framed by Penn was superior to his own production twelve years earlier.

So early as 1702, twenty-one years after the establishment of the colony, the inhabitants of the city were composed of two

¹ Clarkson's Life of Penn.

² Ibid.

nearly equal portions;¹ one of these being Friends or Quakers, real or professing, the other consisting of English Independents Irish Catholics, Scotch Presbyterians, Welsh Episcopalian, German Amish, Swiss Calvinists, Swedish Lutherans, and so on. Each of these sects supported its own worship and ministry. Though the Friends were a large majority over any other individual sect, they carefully abstained as a body from giving themselves the airs of an establishment; and for twenty years the various churches had lived in peaceful harmony.

To conciliate the Bishop of London and the episcopal party generally, who were intriguing for the purpose, King William had made two grants, chargeable on the customs; one of £50. a year, towards the support of a church and minister at Philadelphia, first established in 1700; the other of £30. a year, for the support of a schoolmaster.² Nor was the tax of a penny a pound on all the tobacco exported from Pennsylvania and the Delaware the chief evil. Under favour of this endowment, which in itself was an act of injustice to every other denomination in the colony, "the vestry of St. Paul's" assumed the attitude of the church of England. They laboured to undermine the power of the too tolerant proprietor; now invoking the protection of Lord Cornbury, now applying for support and counsel to the see of London and to other parties. They wished to be made the national church; to obtain endowments, charters and privileges from the state. Their first measure therefore was to get the colony annexed to the English crown. They pleaded falsely and unreasonably the licence of a party suffering persecution. Their clergy, they said, had not the same rank and rights as in England. This was their grievance. In a land of equals they would be superior. Claiming immunities which were denied to all, they wished to be the dominant church as in the mother country.³ Their attempts however were not successful. The germs of civil and religious freedom which had been implanted could not be eradicated, but continued to grow and prosper.

¹ The population of the city at that time appears to have been about 10,000; at present it amounts to about 280,000, the number of acknowledged Friends being nearly 2,400.

² This was at the time of the commotion excited by George Keith.—See *Richardson and Bownas' Lives.*

³ Dixon's Life of Penn.

With these great but simple Christian principles, neither employing nor requiring any arms whatever of offence or defence, Pennsylvania afforded to the world a striking example worthy of universal imitation, enjoying internal religious freedom among a variety of sects, and external peace even among aboriginal barbarous tribes. No militia or other soldiers were employed; the constable's staff was the only instrument of authority. The state did not interfere with religious matters; every denomination was alike protected. No theatrical amusements were permitted; immorality and vice were discountenanced. This memorable state of things continued without material interruption till about 1756, or for seventy-five years, as long as the government remained in the same hands, and as long as the same wise Christian policy was pursued by the citizens.¹

9th Section.—General Constitution of the United States.

Having briefly traced the outlines of the civil constitutions adopted by most of the English colonies on the American shores, in reference to religious liberty, we see that though some of the settlers carried exclusive notions with them, and in one case instituted dreadful excesses, yet in general the regulations of the new states on this head far surpass, in Christian liberality, those of the old European governments. Happily for America and for the world, those principles of mutual toleration and freedom of conscience, with some exceptions which long subsisted, have obtained a permanent and increasing hold. The declaration of independence at the revolution in 1776 thus briefly but fully recognized and established them in its third supplementary article:—"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

The great views of religious liberty and equality are more largely developed in the modern constitutions of many of the

¹ "Universal charity," writes William Penn, "impartial liberty of conscience, and to do to others as one would be done by, are corner-stones and principles with me, and I am scandalized at all buildings that have them not for their foundations. Religion itself is an empty name without them,—a whitened wall, a painted sepulchre, no life nor virtue to the soul, no good nor example to one's neighbour. Let us not flatter ourselves; we can never be the better for our religion, if our neighbour be the worse for it. Happy would it be, if where unity ends charity did begin." —*Clarkson's Life of W. Penn: Letter to W. Popple.*

states. The following is a specimen worthy of imitation, from the constitution adopted by the state of Indiana as lately as 1851 :—

“ARTICLE I. BILL OF RIGHTS.

“1st. We declare that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, &c.

“2nd. All men shall be secured in the natural right to worship Almighty God, according to the dictates of their own consciences.

“3rd. No law shall, in any case whatsoever, control the exercise and enjoyment of religious opinions, or interfere with the rights of conscience.

“4th. No preference shall be given, by law, to any creed, religious society, or mode of worship; and no man shall be compelled to attend, erect, or support any place of worship, or to maintain any ministry against his consent.

“5th. No religious test shall be required, as a qualification for any office of trust or profit.

“6th. No money shall be drawn from the treasury, for the benefit of any religious or theological institution.

“7th. No person shall be rendered incompetent as a witness, in consequence of his opinions on matters of religion.

“8th. The mode of administering an oath or affirmation shall be such as may be most consistent with, and binding upon, the conscience of the person, to whom such oath or affirmation may be administered,” &c., &c.

10th Section.—*Unrighteous Distinction of Colour.*

A constitution founded on such a basis of complete civil and religious liberty, would seem adapted to secure to all the people, without exception, entire freedom and impartiality, security and privileges, whatever their rank, persuasion, origin or colour; yet greatly is it to be deplored that, by a monstrous stretch of prejudice, and entire perversion of moral principle, all such as have in their veins the least tincture of African blood, however fair their colour may be, are not included among the “all men,” who are declared to be “created equal,” and to possess as such, “inalienable rights.” These rights are

in violation of the comprehensive and impartial law of God, denied at once, by prejudiced inference alone, and without a word to warrant it, to a large proportion of the population of the globe!

Europeans have indeed, in their antiquated systems, grossly infringed on the just claims of religious equality and liberty of conscience; but Americans, while boasting of the full enjoyment of these blessings, and of their new-born independent citizenship, have violated them still more grossly and cruelly, by continuing to degrade and enslave their coloured fellow-subjects. Practical christianity must however break every yoke of moral and personal oppression, and the reign of justice and equity will assuredly prevail ultimately in both hemispheres.

In the mean time, freedom is yet further outraged in the Western world, by the enactment of fresh laws, forbidding coloured persons to settle in some of the states, or even to remain there, without giving security of an offensive kind. And in Europe intolerance, civil and religious, assumes a bolder position and more vindictive aspect. Surely the cup will soon be full, and the wrath of Divine vengeance at length displayed in judgment on the oppressors! Every enlightened Christian country is bound by the strongest obligations of duty and of interest to conform its system to the righteous law of Christ.¹

11th Section.—The several Religious Bodies, and their Progress after the Revolution.

One of the first measures of a religious character, after the establishment of the federal government in 1789, was a movement of the episcopal body. The independence of the authority of England had rendered parts of "*The Book of Common Prayer*" totally inapplicable to American episcopalians: prayers for the king and royal family of Great Britain, and observances founded on events of English history, had become wholly out of place. The ministers of that body met therefore in convention at Philadelphia in the same summer, and drew up a general

¹ The unjust conduct of the United States toward the native Indians, and the still more oppressive measures of Great Britain toward the aboriginal tribes of her own colonies, must be allowed to be foul spots on the moral reputation of both countries, consistent only with heathen and not with Christian principles, and utterly subversive of exertions to elevate and convert these our fellow men.

constitution for the protestant episcopal church in the United States.

This assembly agreed that a similar general convention should be held every three years, and that the church in each state should have a representation in it "both lay and clerical;" that the bishops, when there should be three or more, should form a house of revision; that the bishop or bishops in each state should be chosen as the convention of each state should determine; and that no person should be admitted to holy orders till he had been examined and approved. *The Book of Common Prayer* was corrected and ratified; such parts as related to the government and circumstances of England, with the Athanasian creed, were omitted, references to the authority of the United States inserted, and a few other parts of the service amended. Substantially, however, the English forms and services were retained. This was the first episcopal convention in America.

To provide against contingencies, and to found a new chain of direct succession, three episcopal American ministers had been "consecrated bishops" in London two years before, under the authority of a special Act of Parliament; and in 1792 the first bishop was "consecrated" in America. At the present time they number about thirty. Thus was the episcopal church fully established in the new States; but its aristocratic pretensions and character, still to some extent retained, do not seem to have won much favour from American citizens.

A comparison of episcopacy, as existing in the established church of England, with its counterpart in the United States is not devoid of interest. The American episcopal church, which in some districts had partaken of the character of an establishment, down to the declaration of independence in 1776, has since then received no peculiar bounty from the state, but has stood precisely on the same ground with other religious bodies. Its members provide without difficulty for their own ministers, places of worship, and religious services. Tithes, church-rates, state endowments and compulsory maintenance are alike unknown. Ecclesiastical patronage, if it ever existed, has been entirely abolished. The ministers are chosen by the several congregations, and the bishops are elected on the same principle. The members of the church at large are clearly defined, and invested

with a degree of church authority. The liturgy has been in some respects purified, and may be further corrected without appeal to any civil legislature, whenever the members of the church, whether ministers or hearers, shall think proper.

A general assembly of the presbyterian church met also for the first time in 1789. It was composed of four synods, and was held in Philadelphia. Its reputation is that of an influential community. The Dutch reformed church, which had hitherto been under the spiritual superintendence of Amsterdam, now became independent. A Roman catholic bishop was "consecrated" in 1790, being the first in the United States. There are now about thirty. Their members appear to be more numerous than those of any other religious body. The Wesleyan Methodists early formed a connection in America. John Wesley's first visit was in 1735, and at his death in 1791, his followers there were about 60,000, one-fourth of them being people of colour. Their various sects are now next in number to the catholics. The baptists in the same year reached about 73,000, and now form several large divisions. The Society of Friends held its first yearly meeting of discipline on Rhode Island in 1661 for New England, and has continued such meetings from that time. In 1672, a similar meeting was established on West River in Maryland. Five years after, one appears to have been held on Long-Island for New York. In 1681 another was settled at Burlington for New Jersey, afterwards including Pennsylvania. At early periods such meetings existed in Virginia and North Carolina. Ohio yearly meeting was not established till 1813, nor Indiana, now much the largest of the whole, till 1821.¹

Wherever a new settlement is formed in the western states, there one of the first public buildings is usually a neat chapel or meeting-house, raised by spontaneous exertions and considered indispensable. Ministers of religion have often been encouraged to settle in a district, by the appropriation of a piece of land for their maintenance. Throughout the United States, either an oath or an affirmation may be used in any case at the option of the party—a reasonable liberty which affords great

¹ In some parts the general meetings were first held half-yearly. See the several books of discipline; also Richardson's Journal, Bowden's History, Holmes's Annals, &c.

relief to many conscientious persons. Dr. Baird stated in 1851, that while the increase of the whole population has been less than fourfold within the last half century, the number of evangelical churches, ministers and members has increased nearly tenfold, all their funds being raised by voluntary contributions. In 1850, according to him, 10,000 places of divine worship were built, and the salaries of their ministers freely raised were about £350,000. So much for the result of spontaneous efforts in the cause of religion, in the Anglo-Saxon states of America!

In Britain, endeavours have been used to restrain the mind and conscience, and to tie down religious profession by Act of Parliament,—endeavours which have been productive of baneful results through an alliance of priestly with civil usurpation. In America, a spirit of independence in thought and feeling, and an absence of all such constraint by magisterial authority, have produced a great variety and some extravagances of religious opinion. With less profession and more liberty of mind, the new world however will probably not suffer by a candid comparison with the old: the one often displaying the fickleness, the inexperience and the rashness of youth; the other retaining largely the immovability, the formality and the coldness of age.

12th Section.—The Existing Religious Bodies.

On an examination of several returns and calculations, the proportions of the various religious societies in the United States are assumed to be, in round numbers, nearly as follows,¹ the whole population being sixteen or seventeen millions:

| Religious bodies. | Chapels. | Ministers. | Members. |
|---|----------|------------|-----------|
| Various sects of Methodists | 14,000 | 15,500 | 1,200,000 |
| " " Baptists | 10,000 | 11,500 | 1,000,000 |
| " " Presbyterians | 4,000 | 4,500 | 400,000 |
| " " Congregationalists | 1,700 | 2,000 | 200,000 |
| Lutheran and Reformed Churches | 1,700 | 2,000 | 200,000 |
| Protestant Episcopalians | 1,500 | 1,800 | 150,000 |
| Friends, or Quakers, and Seceders | 1,000 | 900 | 120,000 |
| Unitarians (beside under other heads) | 700 | 700 | 120,000 |
| Various other Sects | 1,400 | 1,100 | 110,000 |
| Roman Catholics | 14,000 | 13,000 | 1,500,000 |
| | 50,000 | 53,000 | 5,000,000 |

¹ See American Almanac, Dr. Baird's Statement in 1851 to Evangelical Alliance, Census Returns, &c. It must be noted that this computation refers to members only, and not to attenders.

CHAPTER XXXI.

GENERAL REMARKS ON CHURCH CONSTITUTIONS AND DISCIPLINE.

PART I. ON CHURCH CONSTITUTIONS.

WHILE true spiritual authority in a religious community is derived from the Great Head of the church,—without some degree of whose life and power its nominal members, ministers and other officers are but insensible and dead as to heavenly things, and their proceedings likely to obstruct rather than promote vital christianity,—it is at the same time evident that, for the right ordering and government of every particular church, there must be a proper authority vested somewhere, and exercised by some body or person. The question now to be considered is, in whom is that authority rightly placed ?

1st Section.—Opinions of the Early Reformers.

The first reformers from popery do not appear to have had very clear or decided views on this subject. Not foreseeing the variations which might and did arise, protestantism presented itself to them at first as a unity producing uniformity,—as one religious system distinguished from catholicism ; and as some governments had protected the one and maintained its interests, so other governments were expected to uphold and protect the other. But, contrary to their own anticipations, the adherents to the reformation, while generally agreeing in main principles, soon divided into distinct sections or churches, taking different views on points of detail,—a consequence which was to be anticipated from individual freedom of inquiry and of opinion, but affording no just ground for the alarm of the friends, or for the reproach of the enemies of the protestant cause. Difficulties sprang up and had to be provided against, which the reformers

had not foreseen, and for which they were not prepared. Their views therefore, as to the union of one church with the state, and the evils arising from it, were not distinctly called out. Their conflict had been chiefly with the power usurped by the see of Rome, in opposition to the rights of conscience and to the Divine prerogative; but protestant rulers also soon deserted the leading principle of the reformation—the duty of private judgment in matters of faith under the guidance of the Spirit of truth and the authority of Holy Scripture. They imitated one of the worst features of the papacy, assuming the rank of so many protestant popes, and claiming a power for themselves, and submission from their subjects, almost as absolute and unreasonable as had been exacted by Rome herself.

Many of those who thought all gained when they had escaped the fangs of popish inquisitors, soon deemed all lost when they fell into the clutches of protestant persecutors. In the principle and not in the men the chief fault really lay. Most religious parties asserted the duty of the secular power to interfere in matters of religion; and whether in the hands of professed ecclesiastics, or of rulers of the state exercising ecclesiastical functions, the difference was not material; the system and its results were in both cases nearly the same.

2nd Section.—Union with the State, or Erastian System.

Catholics, protestant episcopalians and puritans,—all maintained, that the rulers of the state have full authority to control and govern the church, by means of a union such as still exists in several European nations, and which it is the special object of this essay to controvert.

Matters of religion, however, as has been already shown, do not properly belong to the province or the cognizance of the state, unless they interrupt its outward peace, or injure those of its institutions which are strictly secular or moral. To commit the government of a spiritual body, in conformity with the notions of Erasmus and his followers, to politicians, statesmen and legislators, who may be of any variety of religion, or of none at all, is an outrage on the common sense and convictions of mankind, as well as at variance with the principles of the New Testament. It admits indeed of no plausible apology, except on

the ground that a church has no working agency within itself, to which it can confide the ecclesiastical authority—a deficiency that should not and need not exist.

"The part of the prince," says Merle D'Aubigné, "is to leave a fair field to the church. Princes easily forget this. They like to grasp and mould in their iron hand the spiritual interests of the church. I hope they will feel more and more convinced that they should leave to God all that appertains to God." Thus writes a shrewd observer and experienced Christian; while Chalmers, equal in religious weight, declares, "I regard as co-ordinate errors standing upon the same level, antichristian Erastianism, which attributes supremacy in the church to the state on the one hand, and popery, which attributes it to the see of Rome on the other. It is still human authority claiming precedence over the Bible, that great directory of our faith."¹

3rd Section.—The Popish or High Church System.

Many Christians refer, for a solution of the question of church government, to the conversation of our Lord with Peter. "Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."² The Roman catholics assert, that "the power of the keys" was hereby committed only to Peter, and to his successors the popes and Romish priests, to be used in excommunication and absolution. Such will do well however to remember, that it was very soon after Christ had spoken of giving the keys to Peter, that he rebuked him with the words, "Get thee behind me, Satan! thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."³ Our Lord thus clearly showed that it was not upon

¹ D'Aubigné's Germany, England and Scotland.

² Matt. xvi. 16—19. ³ Ibid. xvi. 23.

Peter that he would build his church, but upon that true faith in himself which Peter had testified, whether existing in Peter, in all the apostles, or in the church at large.

The papists, restricting this power of the keys to the pope and their own bishops, denounce all others as heretics and intruders; and even the high-church protestants claim nearly the same power for themselves, as derived through Rome from Peter, to the exclusion of dissenters.

Augustin declared that "what was said to Peter was said to all believers: 'Feed my sheep;' 'Feed my lambs;' 'What ye bind on earth shall be securely bound, and what ye loose shall be entirely loosed.'" Wicliffe plainly declared that no benediction or censure of any priest would produce either good or evil, except in proportion as it is in agreement with the mind of Christ. And truly when believers, being baptized into Christ, and brought into spiritual fellowship and oneness with him, suffer their wills to be thoroughly subjected to the will of God, having, as Paul thought he had, "the mind of Christ," then, as they abide in this state of subjection and heavenly-mindedness, they can will or desire nothing but what God wills, bind or condemn only that which he binds or condemns, and loose or acquit only what he looses or acquits. Is not this the full extent and true meaning of the power which Christ designed to confer, and is it not extended to all the true members of his spiritual body?

"That Peter was once a prisoner," remarks Gavazzi, "we gather from Holy Writ; but where do we learn that he became also a gaoler, and kept the keys, not of heaven, but of a bride-well? Not content with appropriating the Moorish rosary—an innocent adaptation of Saracenic devotion—Rome must also learn from the camel-driver of Mecca the use of the sword, in promulgating the doctrines of the Rcdemeer!"

4th Section.—The Ministerial System.

Some protestant churches, giving a wider construction to the words of Christ, take also into consideration his further address to the whole of his disciples, and not to Peter alone:—"Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed

in heaven.”¹ And again :—“ Whosoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them ; and whosoever sins ye retain they are retained.”² Such churches profess to understand this power as descending from the first disciples to the ministers of the gospel, and to be confined to ministers in all succeeding times.

This notion savours strongly of the assumed divine right and apostolical succession. It derives however no solid support from the language or conduct of the primitive apostles themselves. As ministers they had a distinct and peculiar office to fulfil, in handing forth to the people the “word of reconciliation,” while other disciples superintended the more secular concerns of the church. All were “to rule with diligence,” and such as “ruled well” were to be “counted worthy of double honour,” whether they “laboured in the word and doctrine” or not, but “especially” the former.³

5th Section.—The Popular or Representative System.

Other protestants take a still more enlarged view of our Saviour’s words, maintaining that he addressed them to the whole church, and that all its faithful members, all true believers, are entitled under him to a degree of spiritual authority and influence in the conduct of church affairs.

To the believers at large our Lord directed that the last appeal should be made in cases of difference :—“ If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault : if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother ; if not, take with thee one or two more ; and if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it,” as a final measure, “unto the church.”⁴ In the book of the Acts we read that “the disciples,” being “together about a hundred and twenty,”⁵ united in choosing a successor to Judas ; also that “the apostles and elders, *with the whole church*,” met and deliberated together on very important questions of practice.

The true judgment of the Christian church is fully expressed in the words, “ It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.”⁶ With this sacred direction, the conclusions of any religious body will ever be sound and right. At this point each should aim, that its deliberations and proceedings may be under such a guidance,

¹ Matt. xviii. 18.

² John xx. 23.

³ 1 Tim. v. 17.

⁴ Matt. xviii. 15—17.

⁵ Acts. i. 15.

⁶ Acts xv. 28.

no less than that of the Spirit of its ever-living Head, who promised to be with his people to the end of the world ; the natural will, selfishness and wisdom of man being brought into subjection to Him. The apostolic church recognized different brethren as called to the performance of different duties. "For we being many," said Paul, "are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another,—having gifts differing according to the grace that is given to" each ; whether "ministry," or "exhortation," or "discerning of spirits," or "giving," or "ruling," or "showing mercy:"¹ "For there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit,"²—"a manifestation of" which "is given to every man to profit withal."³

The gift of prophecy or of the ministry is highly to be valued, and important to the church ; but the other gifts, just enumerated and placed somewhat on a par, are important also. In the primitive church, "letters of commendation"⁴ were given to ministers proceeding from one district to another. Such were termed "the messengers of the churches, and of Christ," but not otherwise Christ's vicars.⁵ This was an intrusion which entered at a much later period. Christ is the Head—the Master ; and all believers are fellow-members—fellow-servants.

Since therefore no one has a claim to act as the head, and since no class possesses an inherent power to govern the body, it follows that from all the living members of the church, the authority over it must be derived under Christ, that all things may be preserved in order. There is to be no usurpation ; on the contrary, all must "be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility."⁶ Every member has a duty to perform in the spiritual body, and of this duty he cannot divest himself by relinquishing the performance to others. Every living member of the church is spiritually both priest and king.

The church at large then appears to be the right judge under Christ, in spiritual matters, such as the duty of particular measures, the fitness of individuals for the ministry, and other considerations. Altogether opposite and absurd is the idea that churches are to be under subjection to their ministers.

The possession of a deliberative power and duty naturally

¹ Rom. xii. 4—8.

² 1 Cor. xii. 4.

³ 1 Cor. xii. 7.

⁴ 2 Cor. iii. 1, and Acts xviii. 27.

⁵ Ruskin on Construction of Sheepfolds.

⁶ 1 Peter v. 5.

gives to every true member an interest in the welfare of a church, in its discipline, doctrines, observances, finances, ministers, and other officers. It requires a correct view of the constitution and extent of membership ; it strengthens the community of feeling between the ministers and the people, places both parties in their proper relative positions, and tends to build them up together as a united spiritual family, in a holy fellowship and brotherhood. And on the other hand, the investiture of ministers alone, or in a degree far beyond others, with a spiritual authority over the church by virtue of their office, and the denial to the faithful members at large of all part in its deliberations and management, is a sure method to make the latter in a great degree a cypher, an inert body, depriving both them of common Christian rights, and the church of the benefit of their co-operation.

The treatise of Paolo Sarpi, or “ Father Paul,” on ecclesiastical benefices and revenues, relates many distinguishing features of the church, both in its purer and in its corrupt days. According to him, its government in the primitive ages was entirely popular, the believers at large having a share in all deliberations of moment. Cyprian attributed to the collective church the right of choosing and deposing bishops ; and it sometimes happened that, before the usual regulations for the appointment could be gone through, a bishop was chosen by the direct and unanimous call of the assembly.

Gavazzi states it as his opinion that “ the clergy, who in after times called themselves by insolent monopoly ‘ the church,’ were in early days but the servants and functionaries of the great assemblies of the faithful; and that to such assemblies was invariably entrusted the election of bishops, presbyters and deacons,” as well as other matters of importance.

Whether there be ruling elders or presbyters, or whether there be overseers or bishops, to assist or watch over the ministers ; or whether there be any other form of church government, the difference does not appear to be very material. “ Presbyter,” said Milton, “ is but old priest writ large.” The true foundation of authority under Christ consists in the judgment and appointment of the church at large, united in a real desire to be influenced by his Spirit, and to deliberate

and act in submission to Him, for the good of his body. Unless the government of the church, whatever be its form, originate with *the people*, and be subject to be controlled by them, there will be great danger of ecclesiastical despotism and usurpation, in some shape or other, among the ministers or other rulers, and of indifference and apathy among the hearers, as feeling themselves an uninterested party, excluded from judgment and from action.

Dr. Arnold boldly declares in one of his letters, dated 1840, "I hold it to be one of the most mischievous falsehoods ever broached, that the government of the Christian church is vested by divine right in the clergy; and that the close corporation of bishops and presbyters—whether one or more makes no difference—is, and ever ought to be, the representative of the church." He however, under a vague notion of the "perfect church and the perfect state," would employ the aid of the state to supply the want of a governing body in the church itself. The Wesleyan methodists have long suffered from contentions about the full adoption of the representative system, to be shared by all the members of the connection, the ruling body of ministers being very unwilling to grant it. Priestly usurpation is by no means confined to one religious body!

The following remarks of a shrewd observer confirm the views here expressed:—"The supremacy of the civil power over the religious concerns of the people is clearly inconsistent with a sound and pure administration of the Christian religion. Now there is but one remedy for this overwhelming evil, which has been growing to a head ever since the reformation. It is to vest the church power, neither in the government of the country, nor in an ecclesiastical power independent of it, but in the people. It is in the voluntary system, in which neither state-power nor church-power can interfere with the religious convictions of men, that protestant christianity must ultimately find its true and permanent asylum. The church generally assumes now, as it did in the darkest ages, that a power over the religious conscience should be lodged in a body called the church, or in a body called the state. It is a truth which is only beginning to dawn upon Europe, that this power should be lodged in a body called the people; and that it should be

abolished altogether as an establishment in society vested with power.”¹

It is not however to be supposed that mere popular control will rectify the condition of any church. Unless the influential body, whether the people, the ministers or the state, be subject to the government of Christ’s Spirit, every such church will still be out of order, and will not possess the true character of the “body of Christ.” “Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers,”² is an injunction that can never be too deeply pondered or too highly estimated, by all who have an influence over the professing churches.

John Hales of Eton, an eminent Christian, observed two centuries ago, in his treatise “on the power of the keys,” “this authority was not so imparted to the apostles that it should be confined to them. Every one that heard and received from them the light of the saving doctrine of Christ crucified, so far forth as he had understanding in the ways of life, had now the keys of the kingdom of heaven committed to his power, both for his own and for others’ use. Every one, of what state and condition soever, that hath any occasion offered him to serve another in the ways of life—clergy or lay, male or female, whatever such be—hath these keys, not only for himself, but for the benefit of others.”³

The representative system affords great advantages in giving to the people, or to the members generally, a share in the interests and management of their respective churches; such of course as possess the confidence of their fellow-members being chosen by the rest to act for them, and for such time only as that confidence may be retained. That the ministers should have no voice is not to be presumed, any more than that their voice should be preponderating. The revival of diocesan synods, which has of late been urged in the Anglican church, would not supply a proper remedy to the existing evils, because the governing power would still be confined to the ecclesiastics.

No system moreover can be complete, which altogether excludes females, who are endowed with spiritual gifts, and who are often numerous, pious and zealous members, from some part in

¹ Laing’s Notes of a Traveller. ² Acts xx. 28.

³ Quoted by W. Penn in an Address to Protestants.

its deliberations, especially with respect to the oversight of their own sex. This branch of the subject, apart from all extravagant and absurd views of it, is one of great moment, and well deserves serious consideration; that the Christian character and important influence of woman may be elevated to a proper position, and that the church may derive from it that co-operation, which the one is so well able to afford, and which the other so greatly needs.

Where right order, and a proper distribution of assistance, control and labour are sincerely desired by all parties, there—under a frequent recurrence to the guidance of the Spirit of truth and to the authority of Holy Scripture,—a profitable adjustment of the details of discipline in the church will from time to time take place, in a spirit of charity and mutual forbearance. Abuses will be corrected, errors relinquished, and deficiencies supplied. Ephraim will not envy Judah, neither will Judah vex Ephraim. The rulers will not be oppressors, nor will the people be unreasonable. Exaction will give place to spontaneous bounty. The love of Christ and of his church will supersede selfish and ambitious motives. All classes, whether ministers or hearers, rich or poor, male or female, whether taking an active share in the general management or not, will be united in one common interest, and strive together to promote their common duty—the salvation of their own souls, the true welfare of the church, the honour of God, and the advancement of the kingdom of Christ in the hearts of men.

PART II. ON CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

1st Section.—*Church Membership.*

Where the head of the state is, by virtue of that office, the head of the church, there a relaxation or total absence of moral discipline is the consequence. The sovereign can scarcely be severed from membership while allowed ecclesiastical supremacy, however great may be his or her deficiency in morals. If, as has often been the case in past periods, the head be an irreligious or immoral person, and still remain the head or even a member, the same licence will naturally extend to private individuals. The hedge of discipline will be broken down, by a breach commencing in the most prominent and dangerous quarter. A

general absence or laxity of moral control, and an entire indefiniteness of membership, as in the Anglican church, inevitably follow. There can be no clear and positive action in admitting or excluding members. A line of membership is in vain attempted to be drawn. It certainly does not include as members all who contribute under compulsion to the minister and services, or it would comprehend the nation. Nor does it extend to all those who have been sprinkled in infancy, or confirmed in youth, or who occasionally attend the national forms of worship, which would be very insufficient grounds of church fellowship. Nor can it be construed so exclusively as to be confined to those only who partake of the bread and wine, or who are punctual attenders of all the religious services. Neither of these circumstances affords a safe and determinate rule; and no general standard or test of faith or of morals being maintained, a heterogeneous medley is loosely held together, going under the general denomination of a Christian church, but with such an acknowledged discordance of opinions, that the state declines to call even the ecclesiastical functionaries together in consultation, lest their incongruous views and rash movements should prove of evil report to the world, and fatal to their continued fellowship.

The effects of this looseness of membership are more injurious, in a moral and religious sense, to the nation at large than is usually supposed. A man may be naturally ashamed and humiliated to feel that he belongs to no denomination of Christians, and to be an outcast from all religious communion; but the salutary effects of such a consciousness will be in great measure lost, if he can shelter himself, as thousands do, under the idea of belonging to an established general church; while his chief or only connection with it is a ceremony performed upon him while an unconscious infant, or an occasional attendance of its worship once in a week, or a month, or a year.

A Christian church therefore, it is presumed, ought not to consist of a miscellaneous number, who do not know whether they are included within the pale of membership or not; but ought to have its constitution so well defined, and so established on Christian faith and practice, that all its members may be without moral reproach, and may share in the common responsibilities and privileges of a healthy operative body.

2nd Section.—Care of the Poor.

One of the first duties which engaged the attention of the members of the primitive Christian church, was a provision for the outward wants of its poor. To fulfil this great duty their united exertions were directed, and their contributions liberally poured in. And surely the same object has a legitimate and powerful claim on the care of every Christian church at the present time. To throw off this charge on the state or the public, to be coldly administered by the agents of the law or by chance, is a dereliction of duty which is submitted to be neither sanctioned by Scripture example, nor productive of good effects on the minds of either party. Did every church provide with attention and kindness for its own poor members, there would be much less pauperism and suffering, the bonds of mutual interest and charity would be strengthened, and all would feel closely united in one common brotherhood of spirituals and temporals. The poor would be distinctly owned as well as the rich, to be members of that body, whose Holy Head ever evinced a special regard to their instruction and comfort. Is there not some truth in the assertion that the Roman catholic church is, in many places, more attentive to the poor than some protestant bodies? and that in England the poor suffered great temporal loss from the reformation? If there is any ground for these reproaches they ought to be rolled off for ever. But truly with shame be it spoken, is there not great reason to fear that, in most modern churches, the demands of the ministers have exhausted the generosity of the members, and left the poor unprovided for?

3rd Section.—On Dealing with Delinquents.

Some sort of order and of dealing with delinquents being obviously necessary in every well regulated church, the next point for consideration is, the kind and extent of discipline which ought to be exercised in this and other respects. The membership of adult individuals in any religious body should evidently be the result of conviction and preference. If these

tend towards another body, and outward interested motives are allowed to supersede them, the real efficiency of such members is destroyed as respects that particular church, although they may be good members of another which they prefer. Every motive therefore, which supplants the true ground of inward conviction and preference, must be carefully avoided as a base substitute; and no agencies, such as the hope of gain or the fear of loss, either in purse or in reputation, must be brought to operate, and to interfere with the conscientious action of private judgment,—the indispensable requisite to all true religious profession.

The authority and discipline of a church over its members must not therefore exceed this limit. If an individual within its pale cannot conscientiously unite with it as a whole, he must be left at full liberty to withdraw, without penalty or denunciation. If he commit a breach of its rules, or of morality, or embrace doctrines opposed to those of the society of which he is a nominal member, and if repeated endeavours to retain or convince him prove in vain, he must be separated from the body in a spirit of Christian good-will, with regret for the cause. Any measures which go beyond this line of charity, and interfere with independence of feeling and profession, are clearly at variance with the freedom and sincerity of all true religion, and tend to crush it at the root. The judgment of conscience not being within the province of fallible man, but God's prerogative, to Him must the dissentient, and ourselves also, either stand or fall. A breach of morality or Christian love comes, in many cases, within secular jurisdiction, and ought to be viewed as a more heinous offence than doctrinal differences, important as these may be.

"The arms of a religious society," says Locke, "are those of exhortation, admonition and advice; beyond these nothing remains, but to separate the obstinate from the society. This is the last and utmost force of ecclesiastical authority, and no other punishment can be inflicted. No church is bound by the duty of toleration to retain any one in her bosom, who continues obstinately to offend against her laws. But no private person, nor particular church has a right in any manner to prejudice another person in his civil enjoyments, because he differs in opinion. Nay, we must not content ourselves with the narrow

measure of bare justice, but must add to it the charity, bounty, and liberality enjoined by the gospel."

In the New Testament are clearly laid down the true principles of church discipline. "Brethren," says the Apostle Paul, "if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."¹ The spiritually minded are to be the agents, they are to act with meekness, considering their own liability to temptation, and their great object must be to reclaim and restore. For this purpose, the good order laid down by our Lord,² and before noticed, must be observed:—First, "Tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he will hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother," which is the great purpose; "if not, then take with thee one or two more;" and if still unsuccessful, finally "tell it to the church." If all these measures fail, "let him be to thee as a heathen man and a publican."—Not let him be imprisoned, or fined, or scourged. And this, it must be remembered, was for a trespass against a brother—probably a moral delinquency.

Bingham states, that the discipline of the ancient church consisted in giving admonition, in exclusion from the common spiritual privileges of believers, in pronouncing censure. It did not extend to the privation of natural or civil rights. All, whether men or women, rich or poor, were liable to the same disciplinary proceedings. No one was reputed a formal heretic or excluded, before having contumaciously resisted the admonition of the church.³

On important points of doctrine it may be expected that all the members of a religious society should generally agree, while on minor points some amount of diversity may reasonably exist. For conscientious diversities no man can be held culpable, either by another man or by an association of men, though these diversities may be so great as to require a dissolution of membership.

4th Section.—Necessity of Seriousness in conducting the Discipline and other Affairs of the Church.

The deliberations and proceedings of every community which professes to be a Christian church must, it is self-evident, be

¹ Gal. vi. 1.

² Matt. xviii. 15—17.

³ Christian Antiquities.

conducted in a Christian temper and manner. There must be seriousness and weightiness, humility and watchfulness, love and forbearance, disinterestedness and devotedness, combined with lively faith and a holy zeal for the cause of Christ. A good degree of the same reverence which characterizes assemblies for the worship of God, ought to prevail over those who meet for the order of his church. Unless this be the case, and they gather together in his name, Christ will not be in the midst of them; unless his Spirit influence the movements and those who take part in them, the house of God cannot be built up, and the edifice, instead of being honoured and consecrated by his presence, will be in danger of becoming polluted—a body without life, a form without the substance; the kingdom of this world may be advanced, but not the kingdom of Christ. The New Testament contains examples of both kinds, and clearly sets forth both the one and the other for our imitation and warning.

If these views are correct, what must be thought of religious assemblies for the government and discipline of the church, not confined to bishops and priests, but extending to ministers and presbyters, in which law-officers are professionally employed, or which closely resemble political or merely popular meetings, where some speakers are saluted with applause and others with contempt,—where serious propositions meet with shouts of laughter,¹—where disorder and tumult prevail, while ambition and strife too often influence the proceedings? Surely such things ought not to be named of religious gatherings, whose professed object is the right order and edification of the church of Christ!

¹ D'Aubigné's Germany, England and Scotland.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE UNION OF CHURCH AND STATE MORE DIRECTLY CONSIDERED ; ITS CONSEQUENCES ; OBJECTIONS TO IT.

THIS subject has been already referred to under most of the heads of this treatise ; in the present chapter, however, some further views of it will be taken.

1st Section.—Arguments for the Union considered.

Some good and zealous men, while deprecating the civil authority possessed by certain episcopal churches, and asserting the necessity of its abolition, have nevertheless pleaded for a principle somewhat similar, under the term of "*the dominion of grace*." By this they appear to have meant, that righteous and spiritually-minded persons had a claim to possess civil power in the world, and ought, on the ground of Christian expediency, to exert it to the honour of God, in encouraging and maintaining truth and righteousness among men, and putting down their contraries. There is, it must be acknowledged, something specious in this idea ; yet, when attentively considered, it is evidently the same in reality as the union of civil and ecclesiastical authority, which these very persons have complained of.

"It is a very important truth," said Dr. Arnold, "which fanaticism has often neglected,—that moral and spiritual authority does not interfere with the ordinary laws of political rights, and that the children of God are not, by virtue of that relation, to claim any dominion upon earth."¹

Though Divine grace, or "the manifestation of the Spirit," is good and infallible, yet its subject, the human heart, is fallible

¹ Lectures on Modern History.

and evil; and while men in authority may think themselves under "the dominion of grace," and qualified to exercise it, they may, at the same time, be under the guidance of a different and opposite principle.

A great error even of sincere ministers of Christ has been, to imagine that the more of worldly power and influence they could obtain, the more they should promote the kingdom of the Redeemer. In his own body he repudiated this deceptive idea, and refused the authority and glory of this world; but his professed spiritual body, his followers, have too much forgotten his example, and accepted, under a plea of doing God service, that secular greatness which has alienated them from him, and has often been perverted to evil purposes.

Several eminent modern writers have asserted that "the perfect state and the perfect church" must be one and the same thing—different integral parts of the same whole; and that to speak of an alliance between them, as between two sovereign states, is an idle and fanciful speculation; because religion not only falls within the province, but is the duty, of the Christian magistrate, and ought, as one of the great bonds and blessings of human society, to be the principal thing in his care.

That religion is the duty of the Christian magistrate as of every other individual, is readily admitted; while at the same time, it cannot be conceded that his province is to uphold his own particular views of it by magisterial means. The measures which uphold the religion and church of Christ must be such as appeal to the conscience and judgment by gentle persuasion and spiritual motives, not by that outward force which alone the civil magistrate has under his control.

However true this theory of the identity of the perfect state and the perfect church, the reasoning built upon it is utterly fallacious. The idea, however, has probably influenced many, to attempt to make the existing state and church identical, and to constrain all the subjects of one state to become members of one church.

When we speak, therefore, of the perfect state and the perfect church, we speak not of present realities, of actual human experiences; but of excellence not now to be counted on as possessed. On the contrary, we have to deal with human society, such as we find it, composed of individuals widely differing in

sentiment on religion, liable to be seduced by external motives, and often deeply tinctured with evil. The perfect state and the perfect church present a beautiful image; but the present state, and the present churches, are the subjects of our consideration, and very imperfect elements. If we apply to the actual state of things, arguments and measures belonging to an imaginary one, we reason very inconclusively, and cannot fail to be disappointed.

The idea of perfection and identity in the state and in the church supposes that the one is co-extensive with the other, and that all the members of one state are members of one church. But in the first place, if we have regard to the universal church of Christ, this does not hold good in the present condition of human nature. For, how large is the number even of Christian professors who are not members of this great church! In the next place, if we take the church, as many writers appear to do, in a local or visible sense, and yet under some vague notion of perfection or universality, we find the idea immediately contradicted by actual circumstances. Every country has its differences of opinion on religious matters, and its different churches either openly or secretly existing. But notwithstanding this palpable fact, the fundamental, abiding error has been, to imagine that all the members of one state may be made members of one particular church, may be induced to adopt the same religious tenets, to worship together under one profession and ministry. Hence have arisen the greatest evils to the true universal church of Christ: constraint or bribery has been actively employed by secular authority. "We forbid him because he followeth not us;" or, "we offer him such and such inducements to join us." Unhappily, this has been the language from one generation to another; and, not content with "forbidding," the zealous religionists have proceeded to persecution and extermination for this insufficient cause alone. In the great natural variety of the human mind, with the differences of education and circumstances, it is vain to expect all the people of a state to unite in the same views of doctrine and practice, and to become members of the same particular church. The existence of different churches must therefore be counted on. Hence it follows that the state, which is common alike to all, should have an impartial government, and treat every particular church alike, placing all their

officers and services on the same footing; neither endowing one denomination with privileges, nor coercing another with penalties, but leaving the mind uninfluenced and unshackled as to particular views and practices not at variance with the morals and peace of the community.

A modern author remarks that it is "futility to talk of the authority of the church; as if the church were anything else than the whole company of Christian men! Futility, to talk of a separation of church and state, as if a Christian state and every officer therein were not necessarily a part of the church, and as if any state officer could do his duty without endeavouring to aid and promote religion; or any clerical officer do his duty without seeking for such aid and accepting it!"¹

Here is another instance of the vague idea of "the church." One particular church cannot be intended, because such a special association cannot be presumed to comprehend "the whole company of Christian men." Neither can the universal church of Christ be meant, because the state and "every officer therein" are not necessarily parts of that spiritual body. Such writers, accustomed perhaps to regard their own particular religious community as being *par excellence* the church of Christ, are led into strange inconsistencies and conclusions.

We have therefore no ground to assume that the state and the church are identical; or that all the members of one state are, or, in the present condition of human nature, will be, members of one church, in either sense of the word.

And even supposing them all to be members of the universal church, can it be supposed that the governors of the one would be fit governors of the other?—that the chief person or persons of the state are so subject to the power of divine grace, as to be the most spiritual members of the church, or the most fit to govern it? Or will the most highly gifted members of the church be the most capable to guide the helm of the state? Will they be found qualified to take the same places in the one as they hold in the other? Or is it not much more probable that the charge of the highest duties of the one will render them unfit for the highest duties of the other? What then becomes of the identity and oneness?

"The monstrous intermarriage," says Gavazzi, "between the

¹ Ruskin's Stones of Venice.—Appendix.

kingly function and the service of God's altar, has more publicly offended the moral sense of mankind as society has progressed, and as the dark delusions of past centuries have been dissipated by the noonday of civilization. To be a good priest is difficult enough to the infirmity of mortals; to understand kingcraft in all its branches is a gift few can boast; but to combine both sacerdotal and regal functions is a perfectly hopeless pretension! Hence either the priest is merged altogether in the politician and warrior, or the king disappears in the timorous devotee!"

However specious therefore the theory of the perfect state and the perfect church, and of their oneness, may be, we are compelled to admit that this identity is not to be looked for in the present condition of man. When men shall be perfect, and their corrupt tendencies be brought into entire and permanent subjection to the will of God, it is evident that only good will result from the possession of civil authority by ministers of religion and other officers of the church. The *beau idéal* of a perfect state and a perfect church will then be realized. Man however is very remote from such a condition at present. Elevated and happy beyond our feeble conceptions will that day be, when "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever."¹ But fatal has been the error, to employ unchristian means to promote this sublime object. Even under the peculiar institutions of the Jews, where the Most High himself was the Ruler of the church, a chief offence of the first king was, the undertaking to administer sacred things, and an intrusion into the sacerdotal office.²

Some have contended that, as the head of a family is bound to provide religious instruction for his children, so the head of a state is bound to make such a provision for his subjects. The analogy however does not hold good. Children when young are incapable of forming a correct judgment for themselves, and therefore require parental care; but the adult subjects of a state may be equally competent with its rulers, and many may be even more competent, to form conscientious and sound opinions. For his child the parent is to a large extent responsible; but not so the ruler for his subjects in religious matters.

¹ Rev. xi. 15.

² 1 Sam. xiii. 9—13.

Every intelligent citizen has to answer for himself to his Maker. " Every one shall give account of himself to God."¹ Each one has a mind and conscience of his own, a spiritual sense divinely bestowed, according to which it is his duty to judge and to act, and not according to the conscience and spiritual sense of any other man. The ruler for himself and the subject for himself; each a free, intelligent, responsible being, deriving through the first Adam a proneness to sin, yet deriving also from the last Adam a sense of sin, power to refuse it, and pardon for it.

Many strenuous defenders of church establishments admit that, if there were no such endowed state churches already, it would, in the present condition of society, be a retrograde step to create them ; but that existing, and having been so constituted from early ages, they must still be upheld. This is the common apology for many of the evils and abuses handed down by antiquity, it is however of no validity against the great Christian principles of the New Testament.

If it were conceded, for the sake of argument, that the protestant episcopal rulers of this country have a right to require from all the people contributions to that form of religion ; on the same ground, it would follow that the popish rulers of other countries must have a similar right over their own people, to compel their support of the Roman catholic tenets and observances. It would be difficult to show, why the Unitarians, the Jews, the Mahometans, and even idolaters, when uppermost in any country, would not also have a right to enforce on the people the maintenance of their respective opinions. The absurdity and confusion attending the admission of such a principle, and its opposition to the spirit of the New Testament, are surely self-evident.

If it still be alleged that there is a duty of Christian expediency resting on the state, to provide religious instruction for the people, and thus to preserve them from ignorance and error —although the subject may seem to have been exhausted— a few further considerations will require attention. Who has in reality a right to determine for another what is and what is not error ? The governing body of a state is composed of individuals, who may either agree or differ with respect to religious truth and error. And supposing them to agree between

¹ Rom. xiv. 12.

themselves, they may widely differ from the great body of the people. Or when the government and the majority of its subjects agree, as they did in England before the reformation, have they authority to enforce their religious views and observances on those who conscientiously dissent, as the Lollards then did? to coerce them by capital punishment, or even by imprisonment or fines? or denying the authority for these, had they a right to exact payment from the reformers for the support of the popish state-church and its observances? to deprive them of common natural privileges because they refused to conform? All such proceedings are obviously beyond the right province of the civil magistrate in reference to peaceable, orderly citizens. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."¹ "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."² "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God."³

If the principle of influencing by merely outward considerations be once adopted in religious matters, not only is a door of danger opened for civil governors, which no one knows when to close, but a false impulse is set at work, and the value of the service is destroyed by the corruptness of the motive induced, both being utterly at variance with the sincerity and freedom of the kingdom of Christ!

Liberty of choice and of performance is essential to Christian devotion. The compulsory authoritative system on the one hand, and the mercenary alluring system on the other, deprive submission of its true value and acceptance; converting it into a cold, constrained and grudged service, without the odour proceeding from pure love and duty, or the approbation resting on spontaneous, conscientious effort!⁴

2nd Section.—Working of the Union.

Two or three cases may be added to the instances of the operation of the union given in other chapters. Archbishop Laud's opinion of the unity of the church and the state, and

¹ Matt. vii. 12.

² Rom. xiv. 5.

³ Rom. xiv. 12.

⁴ See Wardlaw's Lectures on National Church Establishments, delivered in 1839, in reply to Chalmers.

his mode of carrying it out, afford a curious illustration of the effects of the system.

A forced loan was demanded by Charles I. in 1626, and Laud's instructions to the clergy to preach in support of it ran as follows:—"We have observed that the church and the state are so nearly united and knit together, that though they may seem two bodies, yet indeed in some relation they may be accounted but as one; inasmuch as they are both made up of the same men, which are different only in relation to spiritual or civil ends. This nearness makes the church call in the help of the state to succour and support her, whenever she is pressed beyond her strength. And the same nearness makes the state call for the service of the church, both to teach that duty which her members know not, and to exhort and encourage them in that duty which they know. It is not long since we ordered the state to serve the church, and by a timely proclamation settled the peace of it; and now the state looks for the like assistance from the church, that she and all her ministers may serve God and us." He therefore enjoined them to support the loan from their pulpits.

This use of the clergy by the king was not without precedent. Queen Elizabeth was accustomed "to tune the pulpits," as she expressed it, for her own purposes.¹ Something similar is well known to have been practised occasionally in modern times, to excite a hostile spirit in the people towards some foreign nation, or to promote other political objects.

Thus have the sacred duties of the gospel ministry been invaded and perverted, and the "drum ecclesiastic," of the state has been beaten by royal command, to serve secular purposes,—purposes often inconsistent with either liberty or justice. May it not be said that, in such instances, the imperfect state and the imperfect church have been united in an anti-christian league against the rights and duties of man, and therefore against the sovereign will of the Most High?

The "declaration" of King James I. to his "loving subjects concerning lawful sports," which he ordered every minister to read in his pulpit,—but which many felt conscientiously bound not to read, is another notable instance of the arbitrary conduct of the head of the state church. This declaration, issued in

¹ Heylin's Life of Laud, quoted by Mackintosh.

1618, commended a variety of sports, games and exercises to be used after divine worship, in order to counteract the increasing tendency to seriousness and puritanism. The same or a still more irreligious course was pursued under the authority of Charles II., another head of the church, when a flood of immorality deluged the nation.

James, Charles, and other English sovereigns held the opinion, that kingly government in the state could not stand without episcopal aid in the church. Both kings and bishops flattered themselves with notions of irresponsible power, divine right, and succession by high authority,—notions which have evidently long been on the wane, and are giving place to more reasonable, constitutional, and christian sentiments.

3rd Section.—Special Objections to the Establishment of any one particular Church.

If it could be proved to be right to establish some one system of Christian faith and worship, and one only, by the authority of the state; how is that one to be ascertained?

Of course, it must be the true and pure system, the one most in accordance with the doctrine and example of Christ and his apostles, which should be so favoured. But how is this condition to be decided? Is it to be judged according to principles, or practices? Is the creed or the conduct to be the rule, or are both to be considered? Is it to be the church professed by the majority of the people; or that which is in unison with the conscientious feelings of the monarch or rulers; or that which has been handed down by tradition; or that which approaches most nearly to the standard of scriptural truth? Who is to be the judge in so serious and vital a question? Or if a nation sincerely professing one mode of religion be invaded and subdued by a more powerful nation, professing with equal sincerity another mode of religion, which of the two is to be established and enforced?

Human judgment and conscience too are by no means stationary. Society is in a continual state of transition and progress. If then, even by general consent, or in accordance with one of these criteria, one denomination be endowed; and in process of time, as is not improbable, many, or a majority of the members of that denomination, see—or think they see—serious

errors in its formulary, its creed, its discipline, or its general system, and therefore adopt new tenets or services ; what, in such a case, becomes of the endowment—the established privileges ? Are they to be applied according to the will of the nation, or of the church ; of the ministers of religion, or the rulers of the state ? Will not the danger of losing them be likely to act as a powerful obstruction to the progress of reformation and to the pursuit of truth ? and will not the desire of obtaining them be a stimulus to hypocrisy and deceit ? Our Lord reproved the unworthy motives of some in his day, who followed him merely for “the loaves and the fishes,” not from a desire of spiritual benefit. And is not this reprobation still justly applicable ?

Who, moreover, is entitled to judge of the respective merits of religious bodies, except so far as an individual is himself concerned ? Is not religion a matter of private conscience, between each man and his Maker,—one which other men have no right to control or to question, so long as social and civil duties are not violated ? If the members of each denomination are to be responsible to God and not to man, and if no human authority has the right or the ability to decide which denomination is most owned and accepted by him ; then the investiture of any one community with temporal authority and benefits, on such a ground, to the exclusion of the rest, is an act of manifest injustice and unauthorised partiality, let the consequences of it be what they may, or let our motives in making the selection be as pure as possible. Gloss it over as we will, with solemn pretension or ecclesiastical sophistry ; is it not still a violation of common honesty, a departure from the plainest elements of cardinal justice, to compel all to support the particular doctrines, ministers and services adopted by one party, but conscientiously disengaged from by the rest ?

The upholding of one particular church by the power of the state, has a natural tendency to produce high-mindedness and arrogant pretensions. Fallen as human nature is, this is the natural consequence. Thus the best title to the names of Christian and of Christian minister is in danger of being partially or wholly forfeited ; and vain ideas of direct succession and transmitted superiority are fondly cherished, tending to excite the scorn of the infidel and worldling, the sincere

regret and pity of every true Christian, and deeply to injure the parties themselves.

But what is in truth the principle which regulates and prescribes endowments and distinctions for particular religious bodies? Is it the bringing forth of the fruits of the Spirit, the prevalence of true godliness in the life and conversation? Or is it not rather the heathen principle of might, and the unjustifiable law of the stronger, that govern these matters? Surely, if individuals are required to scrutinize their motives, and to probe the springs of action; states and churches are equally bound to look narrowly into theirs, and to trace the origin and title, as well as the practical working, of politico-religious distinctions, so powerful in their effects on the highest interests and dearest hopes of man!

If conscience and religion are matters between every individual and his Maker, and man's well-being both in time and in eternity depends on his faithfulness herein; it is evidently an evil and a sinful thing to hold out temptations and seductions, that lead to violate the sense of duty and to deny the convictions of the heart. The state may make hypocrites, but it cannot make true Christians. It may utter a specious counterfeit, but it cannot produce the sterling gold. The mint must be of a spiritual nature and not of this world, or its productions will be but baser metals. Are we not guilty therefore in a high degree, if we countenance a system tending to produce presumption, fraud and delusion, either in individuals or in churches?

4th Section.—Objections to the Endowment of all Churches.

On the other hand, if we attempt to escape from the difficulties and partiality attending the endowment of only one out of many churches, by extending the favours of the state to all religious denominations, fresh difficulties arise in the way. The result will often be that of upholding opposite and contradictory opinions, of supporting and extending under some form or other, what many, if not all in turn conscientiously believe to be erroneous. Thus a labyrinth of new difficulties is entered, religious intrigues and jealousies are fomented, and the rulers of a state are called upon to judge on spiritual matters of the highest moment, which they may be wholly incompetent to determine.

But will not truth fall in the streets, and righteousness be prevented from finding an entrance, if the state withdraw its protection ? By no means : He who has sustained his own church in all ages, and still more conspicuously when the civil powers persecuted than when they flattered his people, can and assuredly will care for his own, and for the great cause of truth and righteousness, when it escapes both the contumely and the adulation of man. Neither overlaid by luxury and worldly caresses, nor harassed by the infliction of pains and penalties, Christian truth, standing on an immutable foundation, and having the Eternal for its author and protector, must and will prevail. State protection, not less than state persecution, does but encumber and impede its growth, like the parasitical ivy on some noble oak.

To allege that the services of the Anglican church would be discontinued or neglected in consequence of the withdrawal of state maintenance, would be a gross libel on its members. It may be presumed that those who now conscientiously support it would feel the claims on their support to be strengthened, and would be not less zealous in their efforts than the members of many unendowed churches. Thus the fall of state protection would be the resuscitation to spiritual freedom and life.

The concern for the cause of Christ, which is avowed in favour of its protection by the state, is less powerful, it may be feared, in the minds of many, than the apprehension of losing those external advantages which the state has to bestow. The state is a good paymaster both regular and bountiful, and while the ministry of the gospel furnishes the means of obtaining a handsome livelihood, a great reluctance to lose the ancient liberal maintenance, must be expected from human nature to exist in the minds of many, as in the case of many evident abuses.

5th Section.—Responsibility of the Established Church for the State, and its Dependence thereon.

It is said to be an admitted maxim, that the king can do no wrong ; so likewise it appears to be generally taken for granted by the Anglican church, that the state can do no wrong. Whenever the state recognises a new sovereign, whatever be his

character, it calls upon the highest dignitaries of its church to anoint, crown and bless him. When the monarch declares war, he expects the ministers of his church to pray for the success of his arms, whether his cause be just or unjust. When he obtains a victory over his enemies, by whatever means, the subservient state-church must offer thanksgivings. If new colours are to be presented to the troops, a bishop or some influential functionary must pronounce on them the divine blessing, and pray for their safe and triumphant bearing. Whenever armies or fleets are sent forth in the work of destruction, they are attended by church-officers, to give them the sanction and co-operation of religion. In these and various other matters, the church holds herself responsible for the proceedings of the state, which are assumed to be in accordance with the will of the Most High, and, however opposite may be their true character, are commended to his blessing.

The church is also dependent on the state; and large is the price which she pays for its protection, emoluments and honours. Her constitution has been established by Acts of the British legislature of king, lords and commons. Her service, or Book of Common Prayer, is really a long Act of Parliament, and all her rubrics are clauses in that statute; with alterations from time to time, under different governments and under new Acts; being liable to be further altered at any time by the imperial legislature. From any of these her functionaries dare not deviate, under pain of severe inflictions.

What a fearful responsibility, as regards Christian doctrine and the most sacred interests of man, is this, which is vested in the hands of the state and its political rulers, of whatever religious profession, or of none at all! That faith and worship are to be settled and tied down by Act of Parliament—that men are to believe and not to believe, and to use any religious forms and services, as the state may dictate:—surely this is “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men,” and not depending alone on the Spirit of Christ, which he promised his followers should be ever with them, and lead them “into all truth.”

This dependence of any church on secular will and power, has a strong tendency to paralyze the springs of improvement and progress in her character, constitution and services, and to deter

from the remedy of acknowledged evils. If, in consequence of her duty to keep pace with altered circumstances, and with the progress of light, she introduce changes however necessary, and vary from her former habits however antiquated and out of date; she may be said not to be what she was when she obtained the privileges and emoluments of the state, and thus may be in danger of losing them. This apprehension naturally presents a serious obstacle to reformation, and suggests the unwise and perilous maxim, that however requiring repairs and alterations, the venerable pile must not be touched by the hand of renovation, but must be allowed to remain unchanged, even if it sink gradually into decay and ruin.

Yet as the power which made can alter, so also that which bestowed can either add or take away. It may be said to have been constantly adding, at the demands of the ecclesiastics; and scarcely a session of parliament passes, without some fresh largess or claim, to meet the alleged wants of the established church. The bounty has been almost continually renewed, with little check. But is it not high time for Britain to consider, whether she is fulfilling the solemn requirements of duty towards all her people, whether she is encouraging by right means a system founded on gospel truth, and tending to promote the kingdom of Christ, and the eternal well-being of men? Or, on the contrary, whether this state compulsion and patronage are not unsound in themselves, and still more so, when applied in favour of one only out of many religious denominations; whether the ambition, presumption, improvidence and indolence thus fostered, are not evils of serious magnitude, which require to be dealt with righteously, faithfully, and completely?

In no respect is the dependence of the established church upon the state more seriously felt, than in the appointment of the higher dignitaries. If an archbishopric or a bishopric be vacant, the prime minister or the government nominates at pleasure, and the state church is bound to accept the nominee however unsuitable; and whomsoever the existing government chooses not to nominate is laid aside, however much the church may protest or struggle. So likewise in thousands of inferior but highly important offices the church has no voice whatever, the sole right of appointment or presentation being vested in the crown, or in equally questionable patrons.

Who can truly estimate the vast importance of the results, flowing from the use of this power to the episcopal body, and even to the nation at large? On the one hand, excellent, faithful men may be put in office, who have received an anointing from on high, sound in doctrine, diligent in service, holy in life, and having at heart the honour of God and the salvation of souls. Or on the other hand, men without a due sense of religion, deeply tinctured with error, questionable in conduct, and caring for the fleece more than for the flock,—merely influential characters, political partizans, family connections, personal friends, may be nominated to the most serious stations; and thrust on a diocese or a parish for life.

It is a well-known fact, that down to a recent period, the system of patronage having crept into many of the English boroughs, the corrupt influence of their elective franchise had become, in the hands of peers of the realm and other affluent persons, an unconstitutional but productive species of property, which they were enabled to dispose of at pleasure for pecuniary or influential considerations. At length however, this flagrant abuse could be no longer tolerated by the advanced light of the age, and the whole system of borough patronage was swept away by the parliamentary and corporate reform acts. Surely the system of ecclesiastical patronage is, in many respects, a much more serious evil, and one which still more loudly demands abolition. Can such high responsibilities be proper matters to be handled and decided on by the state and its political rulers, or by inconsiderate private individuals? and are not the secularizing effects of the system, with the attendant jealousies and contentions, very manifest and continually recurring causes of just offence and lamentation?

6th Section.—The State Responsible for its Church, and in some degree dependent upon it.

A high and weighty responsibility for the established church rests on the state and on every member of it. That church having become what she is, either by legislative enactment, by her own encroachment, by public sufferance, or by the whole combined, an obligation arises impartially to inquire what she is,

what she ought to be, how far individual responsibility extends, and what are the duties it imposes upon each.

Such reflections have operated with the writer to bring the subject, solely in a feeling of good will, before his fellow-countrymen of all religious denominations; that they may sufficiently ponder the nature of the system which they contribute to uphold, and the weight of the eternal interests lying at their door. Let these things be seriously deliberated upon, not with bitterness, envy or worldly motives; but in the spirit of prayer, of truth, and of charity; that the remedies necessary may be perceived, and applied speedily in a proper manner.

7th Section.—Effects produced by the Union on the character and conduct of Dignitaries and Ministers.

No part of the whole subject is more difficult than the present to be treated with truth and faithfulness, and at the same time with delicacy and charity. The complaint, as before remarked, is not so much of individuals, as of a system, and of the natural tendency of that system to produce unfavourable effects on any body of men subjected to its influences. Any other body than the present established church, if placed in a like position, would probably be just as injuriously affected by the same sinister bias, or even more so. It is to the commendation of many of those who are now exposed to it, that they are not warped aside still more from the line of moderation and forbearance.

One great evil of the system on the professors, and especially on the ministers of a state church, is this,—that being established and upheld by law, and possessing the special favour and authority of the state, many of them naturally look down upon all those of other denominations as inferiors and schismatics. *Theirs* they conceive to be the genuine religion of the land, the true faith and the authorized church—*their* worship and services to be divinely acknowledged, and those of all others to be only tolerated, and standing lower in the scale of Divine and human account. To *their* ministers the care of all the souls throughout the nation is assumed to be committed. These remarks in words or in import are very common. “This is my parish”—“that is his”—“these are my people”—and “no

minister of any other body has authority to expound the scriptures, or to conduct Divine worship among them." This is the tone and spirit of *some*, and in that restricted sense happily the present remarks are to be understood. With such sentiments, the carriage and bearing of these successors of fishermen and tent-makers is of course high and imperious, bespeaking exalted and absurd pretensions. The vain assumption would however be merely amusing, were it not that it relates to interests of the greatest moment, and that the injurious effects on their own minds and on those of others demand our sincere reprobation and regret. Elevated in their own apprehension above the level of the rest of the community, they associate too exclusively together in familiar intercourse, having little sympathy with the public at large, very ignorant of the usages and requirements of common life, and exercising but feeble influence of a moral and useful character on the mass of the people. Of that imagined superiority, and general isolation from their fellow-christians, much doubtless is to be attributed to the narrowness and unsoundness of collegiate education ; but the greater part of the evil must be charged to the establishment and endowment by the state.

Ministers of religion, thus placed in a false position with reference to persons around them—a position which many have attained more through the arrangements of parents, than through any particular choice or qualification of their own—yet regarding themselves, in opposition to true gospel precedent, as "the clergy," an eminently endowed body, and all others as "the laity," or possessors of inferior religious privileges and qualifications, are most unfavourably circumstanced for the growth of humility, meekness and charity, by subjection to the crucifying, transforming power of the spirit of Christ. They may be, and doubtless many of them are, subjects of Christ's spiritual kingdom and members of his universal church ; but their standing and circumstances are against them ; and if they know in themselves the work of vital religion, and a true call to the ministry and apostleship of Christ, it will not be by virtue of any outward advantage or apostolic succession, but in spite of these disqualifying notions and their influences. What so likely as the protection and preference of the state to create indifference and laxity in their own minds and habits, to

encourage pride and presumption, to foster intolerance and harshness towards those who differ, and to reduce themselves, and consequently the episcopal church at large, to an inauspicious situation in point of spiritual efficiency and fruitfulness.

The members generally, occupying an imaginary pre-eminence, a privileged and commanding ground, are also liable to a strong temptation to imbibe the vain and self-complacent feelings which such ideal superiority is calculated to inspire, and to lose sight of the humility, gentleness, and teachableness, essential to all the followers of the lowly Jesus.

Enough may have been said on this painful part of the subject, and on those peculiar temptations to evil, which are the costly and dangerous price of worldly preference and emolument attached to one religious profession. The picture might be much more deeply shaded, and many painful instances might be selected; but as the object in view is to probe, rectify, and heal the moral wound, not to inflame and irritate, the writer willingly passes on, commanding the subject, with its evils and dangers, to the unprejudiced and grave consideration of his countrymen.

8th Section.—Summary of Chief Objections to the Union.

The chief objections to a church establishment, or the union of church and state, may be briefly summed up as follows:—

1st. It is inconsistent with the lowly, free, spiritual pattern of the Christian church and ministry, exhibited in the New Testament.

2nd. It exceeds the right limit of the authority of civil government over its subjects.

3rd. It is an invasion of the Divine prerogative, to govern the minds of men in matters of faith and conscience.

4th. It is at variance with the royal law of Christ, “ Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.”

5th. It is unjust toward other Christian churches.

6th. It is an unevangelical compact, and a surrender of the authority due to Christ to that of the world.

7th. It is the admission of an unsound principle, opening a

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door to inequitable exaction, and to antichristian persecution, as well as to the support of erroneous doctrines.

8th. It deprives devotion of its true value, by encouraging motives of insincerity and constraint, and discouraging their contraries.

9th. It tends to give a secular, negligent, presumptuous character to any church, and to its functionaries.

10th. It has been lamentably perverted and unsuccessful, and has been made an instrument for civil and religious oppression.

11th. It brings a church into bondage to the civil government, and deprives it of the power of self-control and of action.

12th. It confines and tempts the minds and consciences of individuals, and impedes the development of truth and righteousness.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE EVILS OF PRESCRIBING RELIGIOUS FORMS AND SERVICES BY THE STATE, CONSEQUENT ON ITS PROTECTION.

THE subject of aggrandizing a ministry or church and endowing it with temporalities having been considered, that of prescribing forms and services of religion is now to be examined. The one may be viewed as the grant of the wages, the other as part of the conditions on which the wages are allowed.

In countries where several religious communities partake of civil endowments, particular creeds and positive modes of divine worship are not very likely to be enforced. But where only one church is upheld by the state, the conditions, as to faith and forms of religion, are generally stringent and rigidly carried out. They are indeed a necessary part of the system, in order to secure identity in the church, so far as this can be accomplished, with respect to elements liable to great fluctuation as human convictions and opinions are. Hence we find an unnatural and unscriptural compact inevitably implied between the religious and secular powers, which is one of the greatest evils of the whole system, and somewhat to this effect :—" We will believe this and that, and we will worship so and so, until you shall order otherwise, provided we receive from you such and such privileges." Or, to express the same thing in milder terms, " We believe and worship thus and thus; and on this condition we claim peculiar favour and protection." Hence arises a state of lamentable dependence and servility; and hence a single endowed church, wealthy, and influential, and learned as her office-bearers may be, has been termed, with apparent truth, " the creature and slave of the state."

This is one of the most serious consequences resulting from

the pecuniary endowment of any special mode of religion. That the exact creed for a particular church should be framed by statesmen and politicians, enacted and restricted by legislatures, and liable from time to time to be altered by them ; that certain forms for divine worship, for supplication and other devotional exercises, should be constructed by the same authority, and that every minister should be required to subscribe his assent and consent to such creeds, forms and services, however contradictory or defective, inapplicable, unsound or unedifying : and that no one should dare to depart from them, on penalty of being denounced as an offender and losing his maintenance—these are fearful considerations, involved in the pitiful condition of secular remuneration, favour and preferment. How many a wounded conscience they may have caused, is known only to the great Searcher of hearts ; who also alone beholds the extent to which they have operated, in retarding the spread of light and truth, charity and godliness.

True it is that we are bound to view the subject impartially, and to consider whether the prescribing of certain national creeds, if they are sound and good, does not establish Christian unity of belief and practice, and provide a wholesome and necessary restraint against the introduction of error, as well as an essential security for the maintenance of evangelical faith. But in opposition to this plea, let it be remembered that, as to the soundness and goodness of such creeds, there prevail at least conflicting opinions, often serious doubts, and in some cases unanswerable objections. The human mind and conscience cannot be restrained and bound down in their workings and persuasions, by arbitrary dogmas and authoritative formularies ; under the same literal terms great differences of opinion on vital points are well known to exist. Such forms are therefore wholly insufficient, to close the avenues of the heart against the irruption of error, or to keep open its recesses to the saving faith and hope of the gospel. Stereotyped creeds and national confessions may produce an imaginary identity of faith, an apparent unity of doctrine ; but if we penetrate beneath the surface, and explore the secret convictions within, we often find their professors entertaining great variety of religious opinion, and very wide asunder. It is indeed a well-known law of human nature, that the attempt to constrain and restrict the mind,

in opposition to the free dictates of reason, and conscience, and the teachings of the Holy Spirit, excites a powerful tendency to reaction, to question, and to resist, in a degree far beyond that which probably would have been reached if no such constraint had been attempted.

These remarks must not, however, be understood to imply any objection to the recognition by a Christian community of particular views of religious truth, as the basis and terms of its union. The tenets of every such body should be clearly expressed, and be capable of being appealed to. Each church must have some authorised declaration of its principles, in which, to a large extent, all are understood to unite; and the minor points of which, if the opinions of the members on evangelical truth generally require it, they may slightly modify or alter. Or, if any individuals are brought to think differently and stand alone, they may without offence quit the society, and unite themselves with another. It may even be well that religious bodies should, at times, have an opportunity or be under a necessity, to bring their professed doctrines to the test of scriptural authority and experience, to recur to first principles, to compare them with practice, and to consider how far the one corresponds with the other. To possess no opportunity of this kind, in the present fallible condition of man, might prove a most serious evil; since in this case there would be no appeal or retreat for the body at large, even from the profession of that which was believed to be error.

But when any mode of religion is prescribed by the state, and a condition of favour and privilege, to whatever extent, is annexed to that mode by an acknowledged compact; then it is evident that the state, comprehending other parties who may or may not unite with that mode, is concerned in the matter, and has a controlling power over such a church. In this case, the compact is felt to be a burdensome condition, a painful bondage; and the consciences of the members in general may be hampered with serious difficulties, from which, except by individual withdrawal, they may find it impossible to free themselves. An undue prominence is given, as a necessary consequence, to the professing of certain required tenets, tending to the disregard of real godliness. When Tyndal pressed on Sir Thomas

More the wretched immorality of the Pope and the clergy, his only reply was, "Our matter is not of the living, but of the doctrine."¹

The ill success of established forms, in producing uniformity of religious opinions, is very apparent from the existence of two distinct parties, which originated about the time of the expulsion of James II., in the Established Church of England, termed "the High Church" or non-jurors, and "the Low Church" or evangelical party.²

The following are represented to be the politico-religious tenets of the former :—

1st. "That it is never lawful for the people, under any provocation or pretext whatever, to resist the sovereign." This is termed the doctrine of "passive obedience."

2nd. "That the hereditary succession to the throne is of Divine institution, and therefore can never be interrupted, confounded or annulled on any pretext." Hence is claimed the divine right of kings.

3rd. "That the church is subject to the jurisdiction, not of the civil magistrate, but of God alone, particularly in matters of a religious nature." The paramount elevation of ecclesiastical authority is plainly asserted here.

4th. "That consequently the bishops deposed by King William III. remained, notwithstanding their deposition, *true bishops* to the day of their death; and that those who were substituted in their places were the unjust possessors of other men's property."³ Thus are exemplified indelible apostolical succession and the divine right of bishops.

5th. "That those unjust possessors of ecclesiastical dignities were rebels against the state, as well as schismatics in the church; and that all therefore who hold communion with them, were also chargeable with rebellion and schism." A consequence full of despotic irresponsibility.

6th. "That this schism, which rends the church in pieces, is a most heinous sin; whose punishment must fall heavily upon

¹ Tyndal's Life, by Offer.

² The two parties first assumed the names of High Church and Low Church, at the Convocation in 1702.

³ Tillotson was one of these new bishops.—*Burnet's Own Times*.

all those, who do not return sincerely to the true church from which they have departed."¹ A vain priestly fulmination!

The term "High-Churchmen," is now more generally applied to all those, who entertain exalted notions of the authority and jurisdiction of the church and its dignitaries, though not to the full extent of these positions.

The low church party, on the other hand, decidedly disavow such sentiments, being much more moderate in estimating their own hierarchy and church, as also the right of kings, and more mild and charitable in their views of other religious denominations. While they consider the episcopal form of government to have been established by apostolic authority, and to be far superior to every other; and while they recommend all the precautions which they deem essential to its preservation, and to the maintenance of their own church; many of them do not carry their attachment to it to such an extravagant degree, as to refuse the name of a *church* to every other body that is not governed by a bishop.² Between these two parties of Episcopilians, there is less of harmony and accordance, than often prevails between the low church party and many of those termed "orthodox dissenters." In fact, a mutually dissentient and palpably discordant body constitutes and will constitute the Anglican, and every other law-established church, in spite of the same creeds, the same articles, and the same services for all. The inexplicit and even contradictory manner, in which different parts of the liturgy are expressed, in reference to points of doctrine, show that its compilers or their royal rulers were desirous to embrace wide variations of sentiment, and to satisfy persons of opposite opinions. What then becomes of the unity of the church?

Although the particular doctrines to be believed, and the supplications to be used, may be determined by law for any national church; yet the addresses and exhortations, if such there be, from the minister to the people, cannot, at least in the present day, be thus prescribed. Hence great variety of sentiment and practice has prevailed, notwithstanding the efforts to enforce uniformity. One minister, according to his own preference, may enlarge on a view apparent in one of the formularies; another may select and urge a very different doctrine,

¹ Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. 18th Century.

² Ibid.

to be deduced, as he thinks, from another part of the ritual ; and the workings of the mind and conscience, bind and control them as we may, will often scorn our futile attempts and over-step our limitations. The reading of homilies or forms of address to the people, prevailed after the reformation for a long period, and was enforced by authority, being often used on account of the ignorance or idleness of the ministers. But it appears to have been a cold, lifeless performance, and it gradually gave place to written or unwritten discourses, in the latter of which the Puritans were prominent and ardent.

It is assumed in an establishment, that the state has a right to prescribe both formularies and rulers, and that the endowed church is bound to submit. The members and authorities of that church may form an influential part of the state, or they may not. They may be so at one time, and they may not be so at another. One political party is in the ascendant now, but very opposite parties have been in authority before, and may be so hereafter. The state may appoint certain men, with certain tenets and services, under the pressure of one emergency or the rule of one political chief, and very different officers and services under another. So that a specially endowed church is not its own master, as to its profession, even in those things which come within the sacred precincts of faith and conscience ; and a degree of painful uncertainty hangs over it from time to time, as to the conditions and the office-bearers to be imposed upon it.

Not only does the prescription, by acts of national legislation, embrace long schedules of articles on the various great questions of belief and practice ; but it extends, as already observed, to minute particulars of public devotional services, and to the very words with which man shall approach his Maker ! A painful and awful position must this be for a conscientious pastor to find himself in ! Apprehending that the state of the congregation, and the suggestions of the Spirit of truth require supplications for particular graces, or for preservation against certain snares ; yet is he compelled to adopt a form of prayer widely different, it may be, in its character and objects ! Or, again, when he believes that thanksgiving is due for especial mercies and blessings, he may find the language prescribed for his adoption greatly at variance with the occasion and with the current of his feelings. The Israelites, in the wilderness, were commanded to gather the manna daily, and to use it while it was fresh ; and an

experience resembling this is believed still to apply to spiritual sustenance and devotional engagements, which are to be fresh and lively day by day ; not gathered from the mouldy human legislation of bye-gone ages. Much are those ministers to be commiserated, who feel themselves under such a galling yoke of religious bondage ; not an outward or merely an intellectual oppression, but one which is calculated to harass the conscientious feelings, and to exact a course opposed to the most solemn convictions. In these cases, can that which is offered be true prayer or thanksgiving, or is it not at times a mockery of the divine Omniscience and Majesty ? The conscience of the minister must often recoil from the legal and chilling terms, in which the devotional services are required to be performed ; while the minds of the people are in great danger of being perverted from the life of religion, from perceiving the real exigencies of their spiritual state, and turned to rest in a cold, formal acceptance of the " commandments and doctrines of men." " The grace of God within me, and the Scriptures without me," said William Penn, " are the foundation and declaration of my faith and religion ; and let any man get better if he can."¹

While the great principles of Christian truth must ever remain immutably the same, the circumstances of mankind are of necessity various, changeable and progressive, presenting a strong objection to the enforcement of particular man-made formularies ; which may have been adapted to the condition of a community at former periods, but which may at the present time be obscure, or less applicable, or unedifying. " In England," remarks D'Aubigné, " ancient and venerable forms have been maintained ; but, generally speaking, the true, the divine Spirit has forsaken those forms. In its place, a human spirit, *produced by these very forms*, has taken possession of them ; and, alas ! still sits proudly in the antique porch of many a college and cathedral ; while the true Spirit, banished from these elevated stations, has found refuge in humble retreats."²

In the construction of devotional forms, the embarrassing question presents itself at the outset, " What spiritual character and condition of the people shall they be framed to suit ? Shall it be that of faithful Christians, as appears to have been contemplated in the Anglican burial service, and in many other

¹ Life in his Works, vol. i.

² Germany, England and Scotland.

parts of her liturgy ; or shall it be that of the “ miserable sinners,” elsewhere alluded to ?” It is obvious that in either case the expressions must be totally inapplicable to some. When one specific form is to be used for all, this very serious difficulty admits of no practical remedy.

Independently of higher considerations, what should we think of using in our addresses, even to an earthly potentate, certain lithographed forms, prepared long since and under very different circumstances ? Would not a few lively words proceeding from the heart be more becoming and acceptable ? Can we suppose, judging from human nature, and the general effect of religious forms, that the use of them at appointed periods has a tendency to promote a free current of piety and devotion in either ministers or people ? Is it likely to encourage and strengthen those views of the spiritual condition and wants of the worshipper, and those fresh, deep-felt and acceptable aspirations, whether uttered or unexpressed, which, proceeding from a sense of entire inability and dependence, tend to promote faith and holy resolution through Christ, so essential to a growth in divine grace ? Or, on the contrary, is not the regular use of such stated formularies, even though excellent in themselves, fraught with extreme danger of producing a cold and lifeless formality, an appearance without reality, a fatal presumption and deadening hypocrisy ? To undertake to say to what extent these lamentable effects really follow, would doubtless be a rash judgment ; but it must be acknowledged that such is the obvious and evil tendency.

However excellent the forms may be, however evangelical the principles which they inculcate, the great question still presents itself : Is the use of such modes of divine worship and religious service warranted by the authority of Scripture ? In the New Testament we have indeed the beautiful, brief petition called the Lord’s prayer, which was recommended by Jesus Christ to his disciples ; but it must be especially observed that, so far from certain precise expressions being prescribed, the command was, as we read in one of the Evangelists, “ after *this manner*,” or to this effect, “ pray ye ;” and his supplicants were not to use “ vain repetitions,” or to come with unprepared or unforgiving hearts. We do not find this prayer mentioned afterwards as used by the disciples, nor is it once alluded to in

the apostolical epistles. At another time, our Lord commanded them to put up their petitions in his name; clearly showing that in the foregoing he had not laid down any particular form of prayer. And, on a further occasion, he directed them not to premeditate when they should be brought before kings and rulers, but assured them that it should be given them in the same hour, by the Holy Ghost, what they should say.¹ The Apostle Paul also observes, that they knew not what to pray for as they ought; but that the Holy Spirit knew their weakness, and would graciously help them.² This is the great remedy for the infirmity of man, and his true guide in devotion. The history and precepts of the New Testament show the absolute necessity of depending daily on fresh spiritual influence from the Most High in this sacred duty of worship; a view to which the use of set forms at appointed times is at least ill adapted, however they may be well expressed in words or correct in doctrinal truth.

"The magistrate has no power," says Locke, "to enforce or forbid by law in his own church, and much less in another, the use of any rites whatever in the worship of God; because these churches are free societies, and whatever is practised is only so far justifiable, as it is believed by those who practise it to be acceptable to Him."³

"The principle that the state, or the union of church and state, is entitled to regulate the religious belief of a country, has more intellectual thralldom in it, than that which the power of the popish church ever exercised [out of Italy] in the darkest ages; for it had no civil power joined to its religious power. It worked only through the agency of the civil power of each country; being an independent, a distinct, and often an opposing power."⁴ So says an intelligent writer; but whether the two be united, or the one be at the bidding of the other, the difference is not material; in either case religious liberty has been largely invaded. The same writer thinks that Catholicism has generally shown a politic disposition to lay hold on the great movements of the people, and use them for its own purposes, while protestants have too much dissipated their strength by intestine divisions,—a hint that is worthy the attention of all.

A minister who recently quitted the Anglican church, in a

¹ Mark xiii. 11, &c. ² Rom. viii. 26. ³ Letters on Toleration.

⁴ Laing's Notes of a Traveller.

statement of his reasons for doing so, published in 1849, thus expresses himself: "State payment is an unscriptural principle of the establishment. The clergyman's stipend is state wages, and nothing else. It is said that the state no more pays him his rent-charge than it pays the landlord his rent, or the dissenting minister his endowment or his pew-rents; inasmuch as it equally protects them all in the enjoyment of their property, and nothing more. But is this a true statement of the case? I would ask is there not a difference in the respective *terms* on which this protection is accorded? What interference is there by the state with the creed of the land-owner or of the dissenting minister? The state imposes no restrictions of its own, in regard to their belief or teaching, on either the landlord or the dissenting minister. But can the apologist for the establishment assert the same as regards the clergyman? He cannot. The state indeed secures to the clergyman his glebe, his parsonage, and his rent-charge, or whatever else he is legally entitled to; *but it is upon conditions of its own fixing and imposing*. The state lays down its own terms, and if the clergyman violates those terms, the state employs the agency of a bishop and an ecclesiastical court, and stops his stipend. And what are those terms, which the state imposes upon the clergyman, as the condition upon which he may enjoy his emoluments? The terms are these; that he makes certain subscriptions, and thinks and acts in accordance with them; that he uses certain forms of worship; that he preaches certain doctrines which possess the state's *imprimatur*, no matter whether he thinks them all true or false; and further and especially, that he is *silent* with respect to everything in the system which he considers objectionable, and might feel it his duty to condemn and denounce.

"Parliament gives to each individual clergyman his emoluments *upon these terms*; and *on these terms* it maintains him in them. Thus then there is a wide difference between the two cases. Neither landlords nor dissenting ministers hold their property upon the terms of the Act of Uniformity, as the clergyman does; and as he will soon be taught to feel that he does, if he transgresses its provisions. The landlord and dissenting ministers are under no restrictions whatever, except that of conducting themselves as dutiful and peaceful subjects; whilst

the suit and service exacted from the clergyman, as the terms of his tenure (viz., to think, speak and act, in relation to Divine truth, the worship of God, and the discipline of the church, just as Parliament in its wisdom has prescribed), prove but too clearly the position, with regard to the property of the establishment, occupied by Parliament, and the capacity in which the clergyman receives his income. It is idle then to deny that clergymen are paid by the state; and this I maintain is an unscriptural principle, and one which must needs operate most injuriously on the pastoral relation, and on the spiritual prosperity, purity, and independence of churches. But that is not all. I must also in candour state my conviction, *considering the terms on which those wages are conceded*, to ministers as the price of their subserviency; to churches, as the reward of their surrender of Christ's rights, and their own best privileges; that these are not merely *state-wages*, but wages of a very discreditable kind—a bribe to blind the eyes in judgment.¹²

¹² Brief Reasons for quitting the English Establishment, by I. Dodshon, M.A., late Vicar of Cockerham, 1849.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ON VARIOUS FORMULARIES, RITES AND OBSERVANCES, APPENDED
TO DIVINE WORSHIP AND SERVICE BY PROFESSED CHRISTIANS :
HISTORICAL SKETCHES AND VARIOUS OPINIONS OF THEM.

1st Section.—Introductory Remarks.

THE history of religious rites is so closely connected with that of formularies, that it becomes expedient to consider them together.

Legislative regulations on these points generally, perhaps necessarily, follow the endowment of any one church by the state, in order to identify the church, and ascertain the fulfilment of the conditions of endowment.

So long as we have the inspired records for our guide, and down to the period to which their narrative is brought, the information given by the inspired penmen may doubtless be relied on, as authentic and tinctured with nothing superstitious or fabulous. Though individual Christians were not free from errors in faith and practice, yet the primitive apostolic churches were generally animated by the Holy Spirit, the life of all true religion ; and they appear, to a large extent, to have kept their first love to Christ their Lord and Master. But having arrived at the conclusion of the sacred history, no sooner do we attempt to proceed onwards from that period, by consulting the works of the earliest ecclesiastical writers, than we find the state of things greatly changed. Instead of truth and inspiration, are legends and traditions ; and in the place of pure religion, superstitions and corruptions. Evidences of a darkening period are the chief objects visible. In the midst of fables and interpolations, and among the numerous attempts to obtain sanction for observances and for documents, by ascribing them to the apostles, it is difficult to discover what to believe and what to disbelieve.¹

Serious and spiritually-minded persons, who consider the

¹ The very recent publication of the remains of Hippolytus by Chevalier Bunsen throws some increased light on this primitive period.

subject without prejudice, will, it is believed, generally feel bound to admit, that the outward ceremonial system, with which a worldly and superstitious spirit had gradually invested the profession of christianity, as partially developed in the foregoing pages, inflicted great injury on its vitality and efficacy; by obscuring its spiritual character, impeding its operations, and leading the expectation of the people, from the teachings of Christ by his Spirit and by his written word, to a dependence on man, on prescribed forms, and superstitious or outward rites. State endowments, and the conditions on which they were held, had a great share in producing these effects. They attracted the superficial and ambitious. Endowments required the imposition of creeds, and this quickly led to formality and persecution.

The writer of this Essay desires to express it as his serious and deliberate opinion, with due deference to the views of many of his esteemed fellow-Christians who think differently, that our Lord did not institute any ritual observance or symbol, to be of permanent obligation in the Christian church; although, in condescension to the outward ideas of the Jews, and in compliance with the national figurative rites, then about to expire and to be fulfilled in the gospel, certain things which are not imperative, and the use of many of which Christians have generally declined, were observed by himself, and more especially by his disciples. Had the practice of succeeding ages extended to the total disuse of elementary rites, great superstitions, contentions and bloodshed, and consequently much reproach to the Christian religion, might have been avoided.

The author does not expect that all his readers will be prepared to go the whole length with his conscientious objections to ceremonial observances; but he trusts that, though with some diversity of sentiment and practice, mutual charity and forbearance will be maintained; and that those who have always believed some of these forms to have been instituted by the Divine Founder of christianity, will again seriously consider the subject, and will at least be watchful not to mistake them for the substance of religion, nor place any dependence upon them, but ever look up to Him—the great and only Source of spiritual light, life and salvation.

Some terms and modes of expression, quoted from ecclesiastical authors, and already noticed in the tenth chapter, will be found to

be used occasionally in these pages to avoid circumlocution, with little or no censure or remark ; but the approval of them by the writer must not be thence inferred. In exposing much superstition, and dwelling on circumstances that are deeply painful with reference to religion, he desires to avoid contempt, levity and unkindness, and merely to discharge a duty to the community ; being sensible that, while evil is faithfully denounced, all conscientious worshippers are entitled to our forbearance and respect, though they may widely differ from us in apprehensions of the truth.

Should it be objected that such matters are irrelevant to the professed object of this treatise, which is, the evil of upholding religion by temporal power and pecuniary endowments,—the answer is a plain one. The ceremonies and observances in question were not left to every one freely to accept or decline, according to his own conscientious convictions ; but, being upheld by the arm of secular authority, aided or wielded by those who made them a means of emolument, influence and ambition, they were forced upon the people as sacred, under the most severe penalties ; and any slight neglect or hesitation was visited at times with persecution, imprisonment, or death itself. Had it not been for this fearful perversion of the power of the state, interfering with the natural right of private judgment and individual conscience, it is very unlikely that, in their strange and superstitious shapes, many of them would have been continued for a single century. The light of reason and revelation, if it had not been restrained and half-extinguished by outward violence, would have pierced and dissipated the darkness of ignorance and error. And why was this violence exercised ? Surely not from a simple desire to investigate and maintain the truth, which needed no such false auxiliary ; but from a fear that the craft would be endangered, its revenues destroyed, and the great modern Diana of pompous and gainful superstition entirely overthrown !

If any should suggest that, by thus dwelling on the growth of the ceremonials and revenues, and laying bare the fraud and covetousness by which christianity has been defaced, there is a danger of injuring religion itself, and bringing it into contempt ; the answer is :—By no means. This is not the object, nor will it be the result. These evil excrescences have produced that very

effect, and their reproach has long fallen on our holy religion, but their exposure and removal, in a proper spirit, can only redeem and exalt its true and genuine character.

The Christian religion stands on a firm and indestructible basis, simple but beautiful, lowly but dignified ; often obscured from without, but intrinsically true ; abused and wounded by man, yet full of spiritual life ; more injured by false and pretended friends than by open and avowed enemies ; hidden from the worldly-wise, but revealed to the poor in spirit ; overlaid by wealth and luxury, but strong and vigorous in the minds of the humble ; long corrupted and bound in a night of apostacy and darkness, but gradually emerging from its obscurity and shackles, to the light, and freedom, and vigour of the gospel day. To aid, in however small a degree, the promotion of this great object, without giving needless offence or pain to any of his fellow-believers, is the sincere desire of the author.

2nd Section.—On Liturgies in general.

Most writers on this subject are of opinion that, in the age immediately succeeding that of the apostles, divine service was still very simple ; but that, as christianity became corrupted, a few ceremonies and set prayers were adopted.

By degrees external rites were multiplied, and new prayers added, to render the service more venerable and awful in the view of the people, though really burdening and depressing the spiritual life ; till at length things were carried to such a height, that it was deemed expedient to lay down certain regulations, to curb extravagance.¹ This was the first and main excuse for prescribing set devotional forms. The loss of the substance was attempted to be supplied by an outward appearance.

The services to be used in divine worship, and the manner of performing them, were put into writing, and this was termed a "liturgy."² The word however is used in a more limited sense ; among the Romanists for "the Mass," and in the Anglican church for "the Common Prayer."

To prescribe certain forms and words for the conduct of outward devotion, appears very counter to the nature of that spiritual worship which Christ taught his disciples that the Father will

¹ Buck's Theolog. Diet.—Art. Liturgy.

² Ibid.

accept. He declared that this worship must be “in truth;” but how can that devotion be said to be in truth, as respects the party engaged in it, which finds vent only in the language of other men, often unsuited to the state, disposition, and circumstances of persons of different classes and degrees of experience, who are compelled to confine themselves to it! How many a holy declaration or petition becomes a lie on the tongue of the careless and worldly-minded! How many a response to the most sacred truths, and the most devout resolutions, sinks into mere mockery of the Most High, by proceeding from insincere hearts and polluted lips! With every desire to judge charitably, is it possible to conclude that worship, being in such cases inconsistently performed, fulfils the character of being offered “in spirit and in truth?”

“Prayer is rather the work of the Spirit than of any form,” said Saltmarsh in 1647; “and no set form ought to be put upon the Spirit of God, but what it freely breathes and speaks. Prayer is an immediate, proper and spiritual act of the Spirit of God in the saints.”¹ “Formerly,” observed Bishop Burnet, “the worship of God was a pure and simple thing; and so it continued till superstition had infected the church, and those forms that every bishop used as he saw fit, were thought too naked, unless they were put under most artificial rules and dressed up with much ceremony, every age making notable additions.”²

Justin Martyr, about the year 160, relates, in his *Apology*, that the president of the Christian assemblies, or he who instructed the people, prayed according to his ability, or spiritual knowledge. Tertullian also, in his *Apology*, says that the Christians of those times prayed in the public congregations “without any prompter but their own hearts and feelings.” The introduction of liturgies does not appear to have taken place till the latter end of the third, or the beginning of the fourth century. There are indeed liturgies, which pass under the names of three of the Apostles; but they are evidently gross forgeries of later dates. So much of interpolation and false ascription abounds in ecclesiastical history at even an early period, that no weight is to be attached to their pretended origin. The Emperor Constantine, who, with some apparently good in-

¹ “Sparkles of Glory.”

² History of the Reformation, part ii.

tentions, contributed largely to secularise and corrupt the Christian church, composed a form of prayer for his heathen soldiers, which is still extant. Although there are many assertions to the contrary, this is one of the first ascertained instances of that kind; and it is by no means evident that any liturgy was generally used, until that period or soon afterwards.

The Nicene creed was adopted under Constantine's influence, as the faith of the empire, in 325; and was enforced, under pain of banishment, on all Christians. Still every bishop was at liberty to frame a liturgy for his own church, congregation or diocese; and so long as he kept to the analogy of faith and doctrine, the details were left to his own discretion. There existed therefore a great variety of liturgies in different countries. For several ages the bishops retained this privilege; afterwards it became the practice for each province to follow the model of the metropolitan council to which it belonged. From the period of the union of secular and ecclesiastical authority by Constantine, may be dated the regular use of formularies of doctrine and worship in many of the Christian churches, which had already lost much of their simple and spiritual character, conformity being enforced as far as practicable.

Augustin, about the year 400, says that there was a liberty to pray, sometimes in one mode of expression, and sometimes in another:¹ but that when the Arian and Pelagian heresies invaded the church, this liberty was taken away, and it was ordained for the first time by the Council of Laodicea, that none should pray according to their own judgment, but that the same form of prayers should always be used. This was one then composed, and the Council of Carthage enacted, in 397, that whoever should prepare any different forms should not use them, until after a conference with the brethren who were well instructed.²

The advantages claimed for a liturgy by its advocates are, that it prevents extravagant, absurd or impious addresses to God; also any confusion or embarrassment in extemporary prayer; and that it secures uniformity.³ Much however may be said on the opposite side. A set form of prayer is in great danger of not conveying the life and fervour of the Holy Spirit to the heart and feelings, and of becoming a matter of rote. It may be

¹ Ess. 121.

² Neal's Puritans, vol. 2.

³ Paley's Moral and Political Philosophy.

very unsuited to the occasion and to the assembly. No such power of forced dictation is vested in any individual or body. It is contrary to the general tenor of the New Testament, and to the freedom, power and truthfulness of the Gospel. It notoriously fails to maintain unity of doctrine. It puts the spiritual-minded, faithful minister on the same low level as the worldly, insincere hireling, to say nothing of a still lower class; while in the mouths of such, sacred truths and aspirations lose their virtue, and become empty and untrue words!

3rd Section.—Of the Roman Liturgy or Mass-book.

The liturgy of the Roman catholic church consists of,—first, the Breviary, containing those called matins or morning prayers, lauds or thanksgivings, &c.; second, the Missal, or volume employed in celebrating the mass, with the calendar, or table of saints' days, and the general rubrics, or description of ceremonies; third, the Ceremonial, or offices peculiar to the pope; fourth, the Pontifical, describing the functions of bishops; and fifth, the Ritual, or services of ordinary priests. The whole is written and performed in Latin. The Mass, or Missa,¹ in the church of Rome, signifies the office or form used in celebrating the eucharist, or, to explain it in the common Romish phraseology, in “consecrating the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ; and offering them, so transubstantiated, as an expiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead.”

The Mass-book gradually received additions of varied superstitious kinds; and, to use the language of Fox the martyrologist, “was patched up with vain institutions, absurdities and perilous idolatry, by successive pontiffs.” The fourth, fifth and sixth centuries were fertile in these inventions and additions. Such were the exclamations in Greek, the responses, the gradual, the sequences, the offertory, the kiss of peace, the form of dismissal, &c. &c. Mosheim relates that Gregory, surnamed “the Great,” who lived about the year 600, showed a marvellous fecundity of genius in inventing, and a great force of eloquence in recommending, superstitious observances. He prescribed a new method of administering the eucharist, with a magnificent assemblage of pompous ceremonics. This was called “*the Canon*

¹ This term is supposed by some to be derived from the concluding words of the officiating priest, “*Ite missa est.*”

of the Mass," being a great augmentation of the ancient form. Many ages however passed before this Gregorian canon was adopted by the whole even of the Latin churches. The ancient British churches resolutely resisted the dictation of Gregory to accept and use it.

Two liturgies of Gregory and Ambrose being in use, and some preferring the former, but others the latter, Adrian I. called a council about the year 700, to determine the disputed question, when the following expedient is said to have been adopted. Both the mass-books of Ambrose and Gregory having been laid on the altar of one of the churches, the doors were carefully shut and sealed; the bishops then betook themselves to prayer, that the Lord would show by some evident sign which of the two services he approved. On opening the doors in the morning, the two missals were found still on the altar, the leaves of Gregory's being plucked asunder and scattered over the building; but the book of Ambrose remaining open and entire where it had been laid. Adrian, by an arbitrary interpretation, dictated probably by his own wish, declared this miracle to imply that, as the leaves of Gregory's book were scattered over the church, so should the book itself be promulgated throughout the world. A decree was made by the council to this effect, and the service of Ambrose was restricted to the use of his own church at Milan. This is reported by John Fox, quoting from Durandus and others, to have been the origin of the great decree of Pope Adrian, for setting up the Gregorian mass or liturgy as a uniform ritual. Charlemagne vigorously enforced the use of Gregory's mass-book, burning the others wherever he found them; violent contests followed, not only on the continent but in England, about the superiority and use of these and other particular liturgies.¹

An account, equally strange and absurd, is given of the Spaniards in the eleventh century, who resisted the despotic attempts of Gregory X. to introduce the Roman ceremonies, and adhered with firmness to their ancient Gothic forms. It is represented that they concluded to decide the question, first by the single combat of two selected and armed champions, and next by committing both the Roman and Gothic liturgies to the flames; in both which trials the advantage is reported to have

¹ Fox's *Acts and Mon.*, vol. i.; Stowe's *Annals*.

been on the side of the Gothic rites. These were accordingly retained for a time till the pope mainly carried his point.¹

Superstitious and rude as were such means of ascertaining the divine will, they are little if at all out of keeping with the character of that benighted and barbarous age; in which, for selfish ends, ecclesiastical power was leagued with hypocrisy and impious fraud, in which a priesthood and tithes were imposed with a high hand, image worship was practised, and gross ignorance and superstition reigned supreme.

Most of the writers in the eighth and ninth centuries employed their ingenuity to discover mystical significations for every rite that was used; till at length there were so many missals, breviaries, rituals, pontificals, pontoises, pies, graduals, antiphonas, psalteries, hours, &c., &c., that the regular prescribed mode of officiating was a difficult process, and not to be learned without long practice.²

The several vernacular tongues were generally used at public worship till about 867, when Nicholas I. decreed that all divine service should be performed in Latin, excepting the Sclavonians and Poles, who were allowed to retain it in their own languages till the fourteenth century. The Latin having become unintelligible to the people at large, some attempts were made in the Italian churches, in the eleventh century, to discontinue the public use of it, but these efforts were without success. The same practice prevailed in the Eastern churches; the Egyptian Christians continuing to perform their religious service in the ancient Coptic, the Jacobites and Nestorians in the Syriac, and the Abyssinians in the old Ethiopic language, though all these had for a long period become obsolete.

Gregory VII., in the twelfth century, used considerable exertions to introduce the Roman ceremonies everywhere, and to establish a perfect uniformity of divine worship; but he succeeded only in part.

Wycliffe was opposed to the use of precise forms of prayer, and especially to the imposition of them, as interfering with the rights of Christians; saying that "to bind men to set and prescript forms, derogates from that liberty which God has given them."³ "That man," said he, "who liveth best, prayeth best. A simple

¹ Waddington's Church Hist., &c. ² Burnet's Hist. Reformation, part ii.

³ Fox, Acts and Mon., vol. i.

paternoster from a religious ploughman is of more value, in the sight of God, than a thousand masses from a wicked prelate."¹ The established church of England says, on the contrary, in the twenty-sixth article, that "The effect of Christ's ordinance is not taken away by the wickedness of the minister, nor the grace of God's gifts diminished, from such as from faith and rightly receive the sacraments ministered unto them, which be effectual because of Christ's institution and promise, although they be ministered by evil men."²

The Latin services and the old mass-books, as they had before been used in England, were continued through the reign of Henry VIII. without alteration, save some very few erasures, till the new liturgy was established by Edward VI., and in the next year the missals, &c., &c., were ordered to be abolished and burnt. Queen Mary however restored them to use.³

Luther did not favour one invariable ritual or form of public worship, but advocated a large degree of freedom in this respect. Consequently a variety of practice has always prevailed among the Lutherans. In the Calvinistic churches also, both extemporaneous prayer and certain forms were admitted together.⁴ Various modes of supplication being still used in different places, the Council of Milan in 1615 directed that none should employ any formulary which had not been approved by a synod.⁵

In the sixteenth century great contentions about the liturgy of the Greek church arose in Russia, and kept the whole nation in confusion for upwards of a hundred years.⁶ The ignorant and prejudiced people were earnest that no change whatever should be introduced, although there appears to have been great necessity for some improvement.

4th Section. – On the English Episcopal Liturgy, the Presbyterian Directory, &c.

This liturgy, or "service-book" as it was formerly termed, was compiled chiefly from the Roman Mass-book, translated into English by Cranmer, Ridley and others in 1547, being the first year of Edward VI., and was established by law in the following

¹ British Biog., vol. i. p. 50.

² Book of Common Prayer.

³ Burn's Ecclesiastical Law.

⁴ Neale's Hist. of Puritans, vol. ii., p. 321.

⁵ Laing's Notes of a Traveller.

⁶ Pinkerton's Greek Church.

year; having been purified from the more objectionable and grosser passages of the Romanists, contrary to the views of many of the ministers and people. The following words of confirmation were then adopted:—"Which at this time, with the aid of the Holy Ghost, with uniform agreement, is of them concluded and set forth," &c. Some parts of that edition, being still thought to favour superstition, were objected to by Calvin and others; it was therefore reviewed a few years after, and then confirmed by acts of Parliament: Queen Mary abolished it, and the forms of the last years of Henry VIII. were re-introduced, as stated in the last section.

Edward VI., "that royal and godly child" as Milton calls him, in the exercise of his powers as head of the church, forbade for a time all preaching, on pain of imprisonment, restricting the ministers to the forms of prayer and the homilies. When the new Book of Common Prayer had been compiled by the commissioners and sanctioned by Parliament, its observance was strictly enforced under severe penalties, amounting for the third offence to imprisonment for life. The burning of two persons as heretics followed soon after. These despotic measures produced much pain among moderate persons, and obstructed the cause of the Reformation. They were however exceptions to the generally mild measures of this reign. Had Edward lived a few years longer the Reformation would probably have been carried to a much greater extent.

The thirty-fourth article of the Anglican church states, that "it is not necessary that traditions and ceremonies be in all places one, or utterly like, for at all times they have been divers, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times and men's manners; so that nothing be ordained against God's word." The liberty here referred to has not however been frequently conceded in practice.

In 1549 some of the people of Devonshire and Cornwall, instigated by Popish priests who were averse to the Reformation, rose in a body, and proceeded towards London in large numbers with force and arms. Their object was to procure a restitution of the mass and other ceremonies, and to have everything restored as in the dark days of the papacy. King Edward VI. reasoned moderately with them in a long written message, in which among other things he says of the reformed liturgy,

"It hath manifest reasons for it; and though perchance it seemeth to you a new service, it is none other than the old, the self-same words in English which were in Latin, saving a few things taken out, which were so fond that it had been a shame to have heard them in English, as all they can judge, which list to report the truth."¹ Thus is perceived the extent of the reformation in this respect.

The service-book in English was enforced by Edward VI. on the Irish, although to most of them it was in an unknown tongue; and it was ordered that when neither priest nor people understood English, the Latin service should be used. This contempt thrown on their own language was an unlikely course to edify or conciliate the native worshippers. Very much the same arbitrary course was pursued in Wales, and produced the natural effect of disgust and dissent in the minds of the people.

Elizabeth, on coming to the crown in 1558, having a strong tincture of popish superstition, appointed a committee to revise the liturgy, and in obedience to her commands some passages offensive to the papists were expunged, and several of the old usages restored. If practicable, she would even have enforced celibacy on the clergy. The great "Act for the Uniformity of Common Prayer and Service in the Church, and Administration of the Sacraments," was passed under her authority in 1559, in opposition to most of the bishops: it established the liturgy by law, and required all the queen's subjects, under heavy penalties, to attend the new forms of religion. This soon led to the separation of the nonconformists, and was painful to many who still conformed, numerous places of worship being shut up in different parts of the country.

The queen carried her authority as supreme head of the church so far, that she attempted at different times greatly to restrict and almost to put down spontaneous acts of public devotion, even by the authorized ministers. Prayer had been generally required to be offered in certain prescribed forms of words; but she insisted on applying the same rule to preaching, and forbade the "prophecyings" which had sprung up and prevailed with the reformation, declaring that three or four preachers were enough for a county, and that the reading of homilies generally was all that was necessary. In thus carrying out to the full extent the principle

¹ Fox's Acts and Mon.

of liturgies she prevailed for a time, to the injury of the cause of true religion,¹ and to the wounding of many consciences.

In 1562, much dissatisfaction prevailing, a convocation was called to review the doctrine and discipline of the church, when several changes were proposed; namely, the discontinuance of the sign of the cross in baptism, of most of the holydays, of the variety of vestments, of chanting, of the use of organs, of kneeling at the sacrament, and of the minister's turning his back to the congregation. After warm debates, forty-three voted in favour of these omissions and thirty-five against them, but the proxies of absentees turned the scale, leaving a majority of *one vote only* against any alteration. Thus terminated the first attempt to reform the established protestant liturgy. In the main doctrinal views of the two parties, the conformists and the puritans, there was little avowed difference, but in the mode of upholding and enforcing these religious observances the difference was great.² Whether the puritans themselves would have shown more forbearance if they had been in power, must be admitted to be very doubtful.

The second great effort to revise the liturgy was that known as "the Hampton Court Conference," between eighteen bishops and clergy on the one hand, and four puritan ministers on the other.³ It took place in 1603-4, King James I. presiding: the proceedings of the king and others were very overbearing towards the puritans, and reflected no credit on themselves. Little or no concession was made, but a proclamation issued to enforce uniformity. About 1500 ministers are computed to have been suspended. Many escaped from persecution to the continent of Europe, and from thence to America.

At the request of Charles I., Archbishop Usher and others drew up a scheme in 1641, for uniting episcopacy with presbyterianism, in which were proposed several emendations of the liturgy, and the reduction of episcopacy into synodical government. But the two great parties were too much exasperated against each other to unite in any such measure.⁴

¹ Brooks' History of Religious Liberty, vol. i.

² Strype and Warner, quoted in Brooks' Religious Liberty.

³ To a suggestion of the puritan ministers at the Hampton Court Conference, the nation is mainly indebted for the last or "authorized version" of the Holy Scriptures—one of the best measures of King James's reign.

⁴ Neal's Puritans, vol. ii.

With the idea of effecting "a comprehension" of dissenters, another review of the liturgy was taken in 1661, and again in 1668, conferences being held for the purpose between several of the bishops and presbyterian ministers. The chief points canvassed were "the surplice, the cross in baptism, the kneeling at the sacrament, and the bowing at the name of Jesus." The customs of godfathers, of various holydays, and of the responses were also objected to.¹ No concessions were however made; some parts were rendered even more objectionable, and the disputants separated still more at variance than before.

A further effort to amend some parts of the liturgy, so as to obviate the objections of dissenters, was made early in the reign of William III. A convocation of the bishops and clergy was summoned, and the presbyterians and others also met to represent their views; but both sides refusing to yield sufficiently, and intemperate language being used, the endeavour to form a comprehension again proved abortive. This is considered by some the seventh attempt to reform the service of the Anglican church. Bishop Burnet expressed an opinion, that if the corrections of the liturgy agreed to by the bishops and others on this occasion were adopted, they would make it "more perfect as well as more unexceptionable."²

The establishment of the English liturgy by law, and the employment of pains and penalties to uphold its observance, have been so far from producing that general uniformity so much desired in doctrine and practice, that they have had an opposite effect, keeping the nation in a ferment for a long time, and at length leading to open ruptures and separations among the English protestants. The Brownists in 1568, and the presbyterians soon after, sprang out of the puritan ministers of the establishment, the former merging in the independents, or congregationalists, about 1616. The first baptist church was established in 1633; and the society of friends made its appearance about 1651. Severe persecutions tended to alienate them all from forms of religion upheld by such antichristian means, and to confirm them as distinct religious bodies.

No revision of the liturgy has been seriously attempted within the last century and a half, yet there is evidently a growing

¹ Burnet's own Times. Neal's Puritans.

² Ibid.

dissatisfaction with many portions of it among a large and influential body of the established church.

Simple, plain, practical christianity has been often overlooked and contemned by the ruling powers ; and elaborate systems of theology have taken its place, producing contentions about articles of faith and outward observances, but destitute to a large extent of the love of God and of the love of man. When Christians and their ministers shall labour to promote the temporal and eternal welfare of mankind, with the same earnestness which they now display, to build up and to extend the church divinity of parties, then will real every-day religion pervade more thoroughly the hearts and the lives of men ; and then will the social, the civil, and the political edifices of society be strongly imbued with the spirit and temper of the beneficent Redeemer.

"The English Liturgy," said the puritans, "hath been a great means to make and increase an idle and unedifying ministry, content with set forms made to their hands by others, without putting forth themselves to exercise the gift of prayer, with which our Lord pleaseth to furnish his servants whom he calls to that office. It hath also been a matter of endless strife and contention in the church, and a snare as well to many godly and faithful ministers, who have been persecuted and silenced upon that occasion, as to others of hopeful parts, many of whom have been thereby diverted from all thoughts of the ministry."¹

In 1616, after prelacy had been established in Scotland for thirty years, a pretended assembly held at Aberdeen ordained that a new liturgy or book of common prayer should be formed, for use in the Scotch church. To this the people generally objected in strong terms, not only because it restricted the minister to a set form of words, but since it also recognised a number of superstitious, unscriptural practices.² In 1637, on the day appointed by Charles I. for commencing the use of this Anglo-popish service, as they termed it, violent tumults and riots took place, which finally ended in the great Revolution. The Scotch established Church continues to use no liturgy.

A grand object of Archbishop Laud was, to enforce a uniformity in religious observances throughout England, Scotland,

¹ Preface to Directory, Neal, vol. iii.

² Macrie's Scottish Church.

Ireland, and the British congregations in foreign parts—to set up the idol of general uniformity. But all in vain.

In 1640, a controversy about the English liturgy and hierarchy engaged the attention of the whole nation. Many severe pamphlets appeared against the establishment and its services, attacking them in a very free and scarcely generous manner. This brought forth a defence of the liturgy from Bishop Hall, who endeavoured to show that forms used in Divine worship are of a very early date. The bishop's remonstrance was answered by a celebrated treatise, under the title of "*Smectymnuus*," a fictitious word, made up of the initial letters of the names of the authors. The arguments on both sides are well deserving of attention, as entering into the chief merits of the whole question. Bishop Hall, who was a man of a liberal mind, expressed himself in favour of a large extent of liberty in religious services. "God," said he, "is a free Spirit, and so should ours be, in pouring out our voluntary devotions on all occasions."¹ Milton's caustic animadversions and able "*Apology for Smectymnuus*," especially the latter, will also repay the reader for his trouble, though partaking of the coarseness of the age.

"Wholesome matter and good desires rightly conceived in the heart," says he, in his '*Eikonoclastes*,' "wholesome words will follow of themselves. Neither can any true Christian find reason why a liturgy should be at all admitted—being a prescription not imposed or practised by those founders of the church, who alone had that authority." This acute and independent man was a powerful advocate for the unfettered exercise of spiritual gifts in the Christian churches.

The use of the Book of Common Prayer in England was set aside and prohibited by Parliament in 1644, under the prevailing influence of the Presbyterians. Not content, however, to allow every religious body to adopt their own mode of divine worship without endowment or penalty, the Long Parliament established by certain ordinances, and under the penalty of heavy fines, "a new Directory for the public worship of God," with another "for Presbyterial church government, and for the ordination of ministers without the presence of a diocesan bishop." These had been "agreed upon by the assembly of divines at Westminster," and by the Scotch "General Assembly." The former

¹ Neal's *Puritans*, vol. iii.

met in 1643, including thirty lay assessors and a hundred and twenty ministers, Presbyterians, Erastians, Independents and Episcopalian, with commissioners from Scotland. The episcopal party however soon withdrew. Forms of prayer, saints' days, and many other regulations for divine worship esteemed superstitious, were set aside by the assembly; and a more free and simple mode was introduced and enacted by law, continuing in general use for about fifteen years.¹ But the yoke of ecclesiastical authority being maintained through the various changes of that eventful period, the people, who were disappointed and suffered under it, became indifferent what party was uppermost, and the episcopal liturgy and hierarchy were restored with Charles II. The minds of men of all religious parties, the Friends and some of other societies excepted, seem to have shrunk with horror from tolerating all sects.

Several parts of the liturgy were still considered open to serious objection, and requests have been made from time to time for a further revision, but hitherto without effect. The plea formerly advanced by Whitgift against alterations was, "Lest the church should be thought to have been in error"—a very unworthy but too frequent reason for resisting improvements.

After the assertion of independence in the United States, as before remarked, the Protestant Episcopal Church, at a convention held at Philadelphia in 1789, revised the English liturgy, omitting the Athanasian creed, and making additional changes, chiefly such as had been proposed a hundred years before in England, by the Commissioners under William III., with others required by the altered position of the country.²

5th Section.—On Homilies and Lessons.

A homily is a sort of sermon, but more familiar; and it was sometimes delivered in a conversational manner. The practice of compiling homilies, to be read, or recited from memory, by ignorant or idle priests, commenced about the close of the eighth century, if not earlier. They were, in fact, long written sermons. Some of those composed by the ancient "fathers"

¹ Neal's Puritans, and Appendix to ditto, where the Directory is given. Buck's Theological Dict., Art. Liturgy, &c.

are still extant. In the early churches it would appear that the addresses to the people in divine worship were extemporary and direct.

The emperor Charlemagne ordered homilies or discourses to be prepared on the Gospels and Epistles. This gave rise to a famous collection, called "The *Homiliarium* of Charlemagne;" which, says Mosheim, "being followed as a pattern, contributed much to encourage the ignorance and sloth of a worthless clergy. For the greatest part of these, if they went at all beyond the homilies, employed their time and labour only on those select parts of the Scriptures called lessons, which the emperor had appointed to be read to the people, and did not attempt to examine the rest of the inspired volume."

Some of the Scripture lessons or selections were prepared and used at a very early period, but they have varied in different ages. "As, in the synagogues of the Jews, the reading of portions from the Old Testament formed the basis of public religious instruction, so the same practice with respect to the whole Bible passed over into the Christian assemblies. It was followed by short and originally very simple addresses in familiar language, such as the heart prompted at the moment, containing the exposition and application of what had been read."¹ The readers were commonly the inferior clergy or deacons. The sufferings of the martyrs and other pieces were also read, and were thence probably called *legends*.

The service of the Greek church consists almost entirely of outward forms, the Mass being the chief part of it. Extracts from the Scriptures, written prayers, legends of the saints, and recitations of the creed, constitute the rest. Preaching and catechising form the least parts. To prevent the diffusion of new doctrines, preaching was, in the seventeenth century, strictly forbidden in Russia,—an arbitrary regulation, but not uncommon in those times.

Homilies were composed in England about the time of the Reformation, to be read in the established churches, in order to supply the deficiency of suitable preachers. Twelve homilies were prepared, chiefly by Cranmer, in the reign of Edward VI.; and in 1562 another collection was published by Jewel and others, to prevent, as was alleged, the propagation of error,

¹ Neander's Hist., 1st period, sect. 3.

while matters were in an unsettled state. Henry VIII., Edward VI. and Elizabeth, each exercised the prerogative of ecclesiastical supremacy so far as to prohibit, at times, all preaching. The city of London besought Queen Elizabeth's consideration in these terms: "That in this city one-half of the churches are utterly unfurnished of preaching ministers, and are pestered of candlesticks, not of gold but of clay, unworthy to have the Lord's lights set in them." Other parts of the country appear to have been equally destitute.¹

In the thirty-fourth year of Henry VIII., Bonner enjoined on his clergy, among other things, that no sermons should be preached, that had been made within 200 or 300 years; but that when they preached, they should explain the whole gospel and epistle for the day, according to the mind of some good doctor: that there should be no railing in sermons; but the preacher should discreetly set forth the excellence of virtue and vileness of sin, and should also explain the prayers for the day, that so the people might pray with one heart; but should avoid the reciting of fables or stories, for which no good author could be vouched.

Burnet says that, in the time of popery, there were few sermons but in Lent; for the discourses on the holy days were rather panegyrics on the saints, and the magnifying of their relics. Divine truths were greatly intermixed with extravagant fables, by which the whole was alloyed and debased. Hence the people ran, with wonderful zeal, after the new preachers, who instructed them in the grounds of christianity. The king and his advisers issued a book of homilies, to be used throughout the year, and thus was introduced the general practice of reading sermons. Parts of the apocryphal books appear to have been read occasionally in public worship from an early period.

Why the addresses to the Deity should be confined to certain words, while the addresses in His name to man are left without restriction, is by no means apparent. But it is evident that to confine the latter to precise forms is an attempt that would in the present day be found impracticable; so that the homilies of the church have been very much laid aside, as dry and unedifying.

¹ Neal's Puritans.

6th Section.—On Creeds and Confessions of Faith.

Several ancient creeds or confessions of faith have commonly formed parts of the service in divine worship. The earliest appears to be that called the Apostles' Creed, but generally considered to have been composed and enlarged by different hands, in the latter end of the second, or the beginning of the third century.¹ The common practice was to recite it publicly twice a year, till about 600, when Geraphius, Bishop of Antioch, ordered it to be repeated on every occasion of divine worship. In the ninth century, it was directed to be sung in the churches.

The Athanasian Creed, long attributed to Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria in the fourth century, is now generally allowed to have been the work of another author. An African bishop who lived in the latter part of the fifth century, is believed to have composed this denunciatory exposition of faith. It was first introduced into France about 850, and from thence was successively received into England, Germany, Spain, &c. Whether the Greek and Oriental churches ever received it, has been questioned. From the modern episcopal churches of America it has been excluded.

The Nicene Creed is so called from being a paraphrase, made at the Council of Constantinople in 381, of the short statement prepared by the first general council at Nice in 325.

In addition to these brief compositions, there have been many celebrated confessions of faith by different religious bodies, but not used in divine worship; such as the twelve last articles in the creed of Pope Pius IV. 1750, the Protestant Confession of Augsburg 1530, the Tetrapolitan Confession of the same date, the Westminster Confession of 1644, &c., &c. To prevent by such means diversities of sentiment, was found to be impossible.

In the dark ages, the creeds largely used in some countries were very defective, superstitious and absurd, relating chiefly to

¹ Mosheim, First Cent. 3—4.

the Virgin Mary, and pretended tutelar saints, mixed with observances of gross idolatry and ignorance.

Cranmer and other reformers had long desired the preparation of a set of articles of religion, which might lay down with authority the doctrines of the church, and secure uniformity among its teachers. The idea was even entertained that a general creed should be drawn up by a congress of protestants of different nations, to comprehend and unite all the reformed churches, and to put an end to the painful divisions which so largely prevailed ; but this was a vain hope, the scheme being found to be impracticable.

In 1551, Edward VI. caused a new confession of faith to be drawn up in forty-two articles, and in the following year all ministers were required to subscribe to it, apparently for the first time. At a convocation called by Queen Elizabeth in 1562, the articles were revised and reduced to thirty-nine in number, without any material alteration in the purport. The Lutheran confession of Augsburg, prepared by Melancthon, was partially used as a model.

Subscription to the Apostles' Creed, to the Athanasian and Nicene Creeds, is required of all the ministers of the Anglican Church ; those creeds being used in its public offices. Subscription to them was also enjoined by the Toleration Act on English dissenting ministers ; but they were relieved from it by an Act passed in 1770. A clear exposition of doctrine is essential to a well-ordered religious body, though subscription to it by every member would be an infringement of individual liberty.

The "Westminster Confession of Faith," drawn up by the presbyterians at their assembly at Westminster in 1614, was substituted, under the Commonwealth, for the thirty-nine articles of the episcopal church, but was never fully sanctioned by Parliament. The Independents met in 1658, and issued the "Savoy Confession," which they characterised in the preface as "a great and special work of the Holy Ghost;" it vested the church at large with disciplinary powers. They were generally more tolerant than the episcopal and presbyterian churches.¹

¹ Neal's Hist. Puritans, &c.

7th Section.—On Vocal and Instrumental Music in Divine Worship.

Many of the more spiritually-minded Christians in different ages, and especially those who are known as reformers of religion, have had their attention directed, not only to the danger of ceremonial observances generally in divine worship, but also to those devices of man which were calculated, by a series of outward attractions, to please the hearing and other senses, to amuse the attention, and to convert the solemn acts of public devotion and approaches to the Deity into pompous shows, and occasions of self-gratification. Among those things which they frequently objected to, was the introduction of studied and especially instrumental music into places of worship.

As a part of divine service, music is performed either by a choir, being a company distinct from the congregation, or by the congregation themselves, or by both alternately. The first was the custom in the Jewish temple. The singing of psalms was soon introduced from the synagogues into the Christian congregations for public worship. Sometimes they were sung by one person alone, sometimes by the whole assembly, and at other times with alternate variations. The more ancient or "plain song" much resembled recitation or reading. More artificial and measured modes gradually crept in.

In the fourth century spiritual songs or sacred hymns, composed by distinguished teachers—as Ambrose and Hilary—were introduced into the public worship of the western churches. Much opposition was excited to this novelty; and it was demanded that, according to ancient custom, no melody should be used on such occasions, but what was taken from the Scriptures. Those termed sectaries and heretical parties often resorted to church psalmody to diffuse their own opinions. The first institution of singers, as an order in the church, seems to have been in the beginning of the fourth century. Complaints were soon made that ecclesiastical music had departed from its ancient simplicity, and taken too artificial and theatrical a style, heathen melodies being introduced, which were far from exciting emotions of penitence.¹ Most of those in the Roman

¹ Neander's History, ii. page 318.

Breviary are attributed to Prudentius, about the same period, who also set the notes. The people were accustomed to join their voices in the closing words.

400.—Augustine had very conflicting feelings on this subject, and says of his temptations, with respect to the simple music then in use, “The pleasures of the ear have deep hold on me. I find, even while I am charmed with sacred melody, that I am led astray at times by the luxury of sensations, and offend ignorantly ; but afterwards I discover it. Sometimes I err in the other extreme, and wish all the melody of David’s Psalms, and those of the church were removed from my ears, and think it safer to imitate the plan of Athanasius, who directed a mode of repeating the Psalms, more resembling recitation than music. But when I remember my tears of affection at my conversion under the melody of the church, with which I am still affected, I again acknowledge the utility of the custom. Thus do I fluctuate between the danger of pleasure and the experience of utility ; and am more induced, though with a wavering assent, to own that the infirmity of nature may be assisted in devotion by psalmody. But yet, when the tune has moved me more than the subject, I feel guilty, and am ready to wish I had not heard music. See where I am and mourn with me, ye who are conscious of my inward feelings of godliness. I cannot expect the sympathy of those who are not. Thou Lord my God, hear, and pity, and heal me.”¹ These remarks are worthy of attention from such as encourage devotional melodies.

Flavian, in the fifth century, is said to have established a choir at Antioch. There “ sacred music ” was brought into a system by Ambrose, and the creed was sung in divine worship. Gregory authorized the chant and the Greek music about 590.

Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, is reported to have introduced music into the British churches about 670 ; it had before been chiefly confined to Kent.²

Pepin, king of France, in the eighth century, commanded the mode of devotional singing and instrumental music, which was then in use in Rome, to be practised in all the French churches ; but it does not appear that this order was complied with.

The ringing of “ church bells ” is said to have been first introduced in the eighth or ninth century. The bells were honoured

¹ Milner.—Confessions.—Book 10. ² Blunt’s Reformation in England.

with baptism or aspersion, to render them more sacred. Popes themselves assisted in the ceremony of consecrating bells, or baptizing them with proper names. They were then supposed to put demons to flight, and were rung during eclipses, "to drive away the dragon." On that termed "St. John's day," they were rung furiously to prevent storms; a popish council directed, by formal decree, that bells should be blessed, to affright demons, avert lightnings, &c. They were also ordered to be tolled for the well-being of departed souls. Nine knells were given for a man, six for a woman, and three for a child—a superstitious custom which still continues in some places.¹

The sixty-seventh canon of the Anglican church directs that "when any is passing out of this life, a bell shall be tolled, and the minister shall not slack to do his last duty. And after death there shall be rung no more but one short peal, and one other before the burial, and one other after the burial." This direction however has long ceased to be fully obeyed.

The creed is said to have been first sung in the Roman churches in the eleventh century. Organs appear to have been introduced into public worship in the twelfth.

1220.—The Waldenses maintained that superfluous singing and chanting in divine service are not to be practised, and used great simplicity in their devotions.

1360.—Wycliff had a great dislike to chanting, which was then commonly used in cathedrals and religious houses, and was known in England by the name of the "new song." This sort of worship, he says, was originally introduced to impose on the understanding, by substituting sound in the room of sense, and so to be a means of keeping the people in ignorance. He owned it was a merry way of serving God, and therefore he supposed it met with so much encouragement. But he would have men to be of Augustine's opinion, who says that as often as sound drew his attention, so often he worshipped God improperly. "Christ," said he, "gives us no instruction on this head, and requires no recommendation but the devotion of the heart. It is grievous to see what sums of money are yearly expended upon singing priests, and how little upon the education of children."²

1360.—From "The Ploughman's Complaint."³ "Ezekiel the

¹ Sir R. Phillips. ² Gilpin's Life. ³ Fox's Acts and Mon., vol. i.

prophet said that when he spake thy words to the people, they turned them into songs and into tales. And so, Lord, men do now: they sing merrily thy words, and that singing they call thy service. But, Lord, I trow that the best singer he worshippeth thee not most; but he that fulfilleth thy words worshippeth thee full well, though he weep more than sing. And I trow that weeping, for breaking thy commandments, be more pleasing service to thee than the singing of thy words."

1407.—William Thorpe, speaking of pilgrims, remarked that in passing through the towns they were often accompanied with singing and music. Archbishop Arundel defended this practice, saying, "With such solace the travel and weariness of pilgrims is lightly and merrily borne; and by authority of Holy Scripture men may lawfully use such solace, for David teacheth men to have divers instruments of music to praise God therewith." To this Thorpe replied, "By the sentence of divers doctors expounding the Psalms of David, the music and minstrelsy that he and other saints of the old law spake of, ought not now to be either taken or used by the letter; but these instruments with their music ought to be interpreted ghostly (or spiritually), for all those figures are called virtues or graces, with which virtues men should please God and praise his name. For St. Paul saith that all such things befall to them in figure. Therefore, sir, I understand that the letter of the Psalms of David, and of such other psalms and sentences, doth stay them that take them now literally. This sentence, as I understand, Christ himself approveth, putting out the minstrels when he would quicken the dead damsel." Archbishop.—"Lewd lossel, is it not lawful for us to have organs in the church to worship God withal?" W. Thorpe.—"Yea, sir, by man's ordinance; but by the ordinance of God, a good sermon to the people's understanding were mickle more pleasant to him." Archbishop.—"Organs and good delectable songs sharpen men's wits more than any sermon." W. Thorpe.—"Worldly men delight to have their wits quickened and sharpened with diverse, sensible solace, but the faithful followers of Christ have all their delight to hear and understand God's word, and to work thereafter faithfully and continually. For to dread to offend God and to love to please him in all things, quickeneth and sharpeneth all the wits of Christ's chosen people, and ableth them so to grace, that they

joy greatly to withdraw their ears and all their wits and members from worldly delight and from fleshly solace.”¹

1415.—“John Claydon, an English martyr, asserted that ‘the often singing in the church is not founded on Scripture; and that therefore the priests ought not to occupy themselves with it, but with the study of the law of Christ, and the preaching of his word.’”² The Bohemians took the same view of singing and instrumental music.

1424.—“The Lollards in Norfolk and Suffolk contended that the use of bells and ringing in the church was ordained for no other purpose than to fill the priests’ purses.”³

1490.—Savonarola of Florence, an enlightened catholic reformer, remarked thus:—“To disturb even the still devotion of individuals, the devil has begun to bring into operation music and the organ, which only please the ear and edify nothing. In the ancient polity, it is true, there were many festivals with songs, trumpets, tabernacle and the like, but this for the most part had an end with Christ.”⁴

The Flemings are said to have brought set devotional music into England. Luther introduced metrical psalmody in popular airs, and this practice became common; congregational singing being adopted. Organs were identified by the reformers with the corruptions of the catholic religion,—they were generally taken down and their pipes sold for old metal. By a retrograde movement however, they were re-erected in England after the restoration of Charles II. He ventured to employ in his own chapel a band of French fiddlers.

1530.—Among the opinions extracted from the books of Tyndal and others, are these that “the playing on organs and singing among religious persons are superstitious;” and that “through such means the service and honour of God are injured and suppressed.”⁵

“Queen Elizabeth was afraid of reforming too far, and was desirous to retain images, crucifixes, crosses, instrumental music, and many of the popish habits; in the Act of Uniformity a clause was inserted, empowering her to ordain farther ceremonies,” &c.⁶

¹ Fox’s Acts and Mon., vol. i. p. 610.

² Ibid. p. 727.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Myers’ Lectures.

⁵ Fox’s Acts and Monuments.

⁶ Warner’s Eccles. Hist. vol. ii.

Drs. Humphreys and Sampson, principal nonconformists, complained of music and organs in Divine worship, as grievances which ought to be removed.¹ The chief puritans in the reign of Elizabeth objected to many of the observances still retained in the church of England. They disapproved of the cathedral mode of worship, of singing the prayers and chanting the psalms, nor did they sanction musical instruments, as trumpets, organs, &c., which they alleged were not in use in the church for above twelve hundred years after Christ.² In 1571 it was agreed, with the consent of the bishop, that at Northampton singing and playing of organs in the choir should be put down, and that excessive ringing of bells and the carrying of the bell before corpses should be prohibited.³

The Scotch churches exclude the use of the organ from Divine worship, viewing it, like the early reformers, as a popish invention. In England, on the contrary, wherever sufficient means can be obtained, it is generally introduced, not only among episcopalians, but by many dissenters also, who are closely imitating the former, in opposition to the simple pattern of the puritans and to that of the apostles.

Herschell, the converted Jew, remarks, "I firmly believe that, if we seek to affect the mind by the aid of architecture, painting or music, the impression produced by these adjuncts is just so much abstracted from the worship of the unseen Jehovah. If the outward eye is taken up with material splendour or forms of external beauty, the mind's eye sees but little of "Him who is invisible." The ear that is entranced with the melody of sweet sounds listens not to "the still small voice," by which the Lord makes his presence known."⁴ Is there not great danger of the one being mistaken for the other? To a people formerly it was predicted that "the songs of the temple" should become "howlings" in the day of the Lord's visitation.⁵

"A degraded and emasculated class of priesthood," says Gavazzi, "was found best adapted to charm effeminate devotions with strains of unnatural music."

In the Greek church instrumental music is altogether excluded, but most of the congregations have choirs of singers, confined to men and boys.

¹ Neal's Puritans, vol. i. p. 154.

² Ibid. p. 186.

³ Ibid. p. 215.

⁴ Visit to Fatherland.

⁵ Amos viii. 2.

The worship of God has its natural music, in the artless but affecting tones of deep-felt prayer and praise! True religion and charity have their music, for they “cause the widow’s heart to sing with joy!” No practised tunes can produce true and abiding harmony of soul, equal to that which sincere devotion inspires.

“ Still let us on our guard be found,
And watch against *the power of sound*
With sacred jealousy ;
Lest haply sense should damp our zeal,
And music’s charms bewitch and steal
Our hearts away from thee.”—

WESLEY.

“ Oh may the *heart* in tune be found,
Like David’s harp of solemn sound.”—WATTS.

Seymour, on visiting a cathedral at Rome on a special occasion in 1850, describes his impressions in the following terms:—“ Everything—the brilliant lights, the shining dresses, the conversation, the promenade, the gallantry, the coquetry, and especially the character of the music—threw over the whole the tone and style of some musical entertainment at a theatre. The very last thought that seemed associated in the mind of any, was the thought of religion! We felt that we might as well be at the opera!

“ Even in London at the cathedral services, may be seen a throng of persons, eagerly listening and sighing for a long anthem and a short sermon, watching with breathless anxiety for the commencement of the words of the anthem, but not for the text of the sermon; and eagerly inquiring the name of the performer who is going to sing, though very indifferent to the clergyman who is going to preach. These persons go not to worship God, but to hear music; and not to hear the word of God, but to listen to the voices of the singers. All this is bad—very bad; though too frequent in the cathedral congregations of England.”

“ You easily understand,” says Dr. Chalmers, “ how a taste for music is one thing, and a real submission to the influence of religion is another—how the ear may be regaled by the melody of sound, and the heart may utterly refuse the proper impression of the sense that is conveyed by it—how the sons

¹ Seymour’s Pilgrimage to Rome.

and daughters of the world may, with their every affectioⁿ devoted to its pleasurable vanities, inhale all the delights of enthusiasm, as they sit in crowded assemblage round the dry and solemn oratories, or listen to eloquence the most touching or sublime,—and yet leave the exhibition as dead in trespass and sins as when they came to it.”¹

The artificial modes of singing, practised in the established church, and among many dissenting bodies, are open to very serious objections. The choir of singers, male and female, who are usually the chief performers, consists frequently of persons who are strangers to religion and of dissolute lives; while a part of their remuneration, as well as of those employed in ringing, consists of jovial entertainments at alehouses, where intemperance abounds, and where the sacred name of the Most High, so far from being praised and reverenced, is often profaned in foolish jesting, or even in swearing! Many poor ministers, it is well known, deeply lament these foul inconsistencies; which cause the musical annals of many parishes in England to be marked with repulsive licentiousness, as well as sharp contentions.

8th Section.—On Peculiar Priestly Vestments, and the Tonum.

In the primitive church, no difference of garments prevailed between the ministers and the people at large, it being considered that these distinctions among the Jews had a symbolical meaning, and that this being fulfilled they were abolished. In Tertullian’s time, the pallium or cloak was the general habit of Christians. Chrysostom speaks of white garments, but not with approbation; he rather found fault with them. Augustine relates that a variety of observances prevailed in different places, without destroying general peace and concord.²

Pope Sylvester, in the time of Constantine, about the year 320, is stated to have been the first that appointed the eucharist to be administered by the priests in white linen garments, of a particular shape, called albes; giving this reason—that the body of Christ was buried in a white linen cloth. The practice is supposed, however, to have been introduced in imitation of the heathen priests. Yet distinctive habits were not for a long period generally adopted; for in 876 the clergy of

¹ Discourses.

² Neal’s Puritans, vol. i.

Ravenna, writing to the Emperor Charles the bald, said "We are distinguished from the laity, not by our clothes, but by our doctrines ; not by our habits, but by our conversation." Gorgeous robes, tiaras and mitres soon followed the other distinctions, and it was represented by the popish priests, that these vestments were essential to their religious services. They alleged that they could not perform the consecration of holy water, the transubstantiation of the body of Christ, or the conjuration of the devil out of possessed persons or places, without a surplice, an albe, or some other hallowed garment.¹ In the Roman pontifical, *de clero faciendo*, the surplice was styled "the habit of the holy religion ;" and Durandus termed it "the linen vestment, which man must wear in holy things." Ancient times are not the only periods, in which this superstitious dress has greatly disturbed the peace of the church. It was considered by many of the Reformers an especial badge of the Romish religion ; but in many of these points the profession of christianity has evidently lost ground, and acquired a strong tincture of worldliness.

In the twelfth century, some of the ecclesiastics appear to have devoted their most serious attention to embellish their garments, to determine the motions and postures they were to observe, and the looks they were to assume in divine worship. These trivial externals were deemed to be things of the highest moment. Would that they had been confined to that benighted age ! The particular vestments, rigidly adhered to by the superstitious Roman priests, were often complained of, even in the time of popery, as of heathen origin, and unbecoming the ministers of Christ.

The rubric of Edward VI. directed that, "at the holy communion, the priest should put on him a white albe (or surplice) plain, with a vestment or cope ; and that the bishop on such occasions should also wear a surplice, beside his other vestments." The importance attached to certain habiliments and their enforcement, have been the source of bitter and frequent strife from the time of the Reformation.

When Hooper was first appointed Bishop of Gloucester in 1550, he refused the office for two reasons. The first related to the form of the oath, (being "by God, the saints, and the Holy

¹ Neal's Puritans, vol. i.

Ghost,") which he called foul and impious; the second founded on the "Aaronical habits." His decided objections to the latter were the following:—1st, because they had no countenance in the New Testament or primitive antiquity; 2nd, because they were the invention of Antichrist, and introduced into the church in the most corrupt ages of Christianity; 3rd, because they had been abused to superstition and idolatry, particularly in the pompous celebration of the mass, and therefore were not indifferent; 4th, because the continual use of these garments was, in his opinion, to symbolize Antichrist, to mislead the people, and inconsistent with the simplicity of the Christian religion. Cranmer was less decided in these views; Martin Bucer at Cambridge, and Peter Martyr at Oxford gave their opinions against the priestly habits, as inventions of Antichrist, and wished them removed out of the church; but on the whole, and with the hope of this result, they recommended acquiescence for a time.¹

Hooper was committed to the Fleet for his non-compliance, and would probably have lost his life had he persisted; but in length he consented to be robed at that term of the consecration, and once at court; but not afterwards. Accordingly when he preached before the king, he came forth, says Fox, like a new player on the stage; his upper garment was a long scarlet chymere down to his feet, with a white linen rochet beneath covering his shoulders, and a four-square cap on his head. These things he is said to have borne patiently for the welfare of the church; but after the occasions agreed on, he could not be induced to wear "the Aaronical vestments." Most of the reformed ministers agreed with Hooper, and hoped to procure an act to abolish them; calling them the defiled robes of Antichrist. To reconcile matters a little, some of the more gorgeous articles of dress were superseded by black, which still did not give satisfaction.

The ignorant people however, through a lamentable degree of superstition, were clamorous for the mummeries of the old observances in this and other respects.² In their views many of the more Romanizing clergy united, considering it a glorious thing, and tending greatly to their influence with the vulgar, to be "arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and

¹ Neal's Puritans, vol. i.

² Blunt's English Reformation.

Because at best they were but human appointments and ordinances, after the commandments and doctrines of men. Because if they were indifferent, their imposition was an infringement of Christian liberty. Lastly, because pious foreign ministers generally condemned these habits.¹ No redress being obtained in this and other matters, the breach became wider, and at length the protestant nonconformists publicly separated from the established church.

The use of the ring at the marriage ceremony was often objected to, as a heathenish and popish relic. It was first introduced at the preliminary espousals, being borrowed from the ancient Romans.²

The seventy-fourth of the canons, issued in 1603, contained very minute directions for the dress of the various orders of the Anglican clergy, but they have gradually come to be little observed by the parochial ministers in the daily intercourse of life.

The Russian and other priests of the Greek church wear the wide flowing robes of orientals, with long beards and hair. This singular appearance gives the vulgar false ideas of peculiar sanctity, but prevents free intercourse with the people. They dislike to change their dress, as the opinion has been long established that it is holy, and similar to that used by Christ and his apostles, therefore the only garb in which his ambassadors should appear. The priests are divided, according to the colour of their gowns, into "black and white, or regular and secular clergy."³

All the Egyptian priests had, according to Herodotus, their heads shaved, and kept continually bald.⁴ On this account it most probably was, that the Jewish priests were commanded not to shave their heads, nor to make any baldness upon them.⁵ Yet the pagan rasure or "tonsure," as they call it, on the crown of the head, has long been the distinguishing mark of the Roman priesthood. It does not appear to have been adopted for several centuries after Christ, and was then introduced by the monks.⁶

In the seventh century, Martin I. enacted that no priest should wear a beard or have long hair. Soon afterward follows the regulation for the tonsure, or shaving of the poll of

¹ Neal's Puritans, vol. i.

² Bingham's Christian Antiquities.

³ Pinkerton's Greek Church preface.

⁴ Lib. ii., 36.

⁵ Lev. xxi. 5; Ezek. xliv. 20.

⁶ Dr. Middleton's Letter from Rome.

the head, in the shape of a crown, decreed by the Council of Toledo; in imitation, it is said, of Christ's crown of thorns and of Peter's baldness; but supposed to have been really borrowed from the priests of Isis. In the oriental churches however it was the custom to wear a long beard, and to shave the front of the head in the form of a crescent, which their opponents called in derision the tonsure of Simon Magus. This was the ancient British mode. By such affected peculiarities, which both parties earnestly contended for, dissensions were cherished, and the unscriptural distinction between the ministers or clergy and the people or laity was made apparent and confirmed.

9th Section.—On the Seven Sacraments of the Roman and Greek Churches.

Many writers have been perplexed in attempting to frame a clear, satisfactory definition of the term "sacrament," the word not being found in its modern sense in scripture.¹ In the catechism of the Council of Trent, a sacrament is defined to be "a sensible thing, which, by divine appointment, hath the power of causing, as well as of signifying, holiness and righteousness." The reformed catechism of Heidelberg describes the sacraments as "holy, visible signs and seals, ordained by God—that he may more fully declare and seal by them the promise of his gospel unto us, that he freely giveth remission of sins and life eternal, upon the account of that only sacrifice upon the cross." The twenty-fifth article of the church of England more nearly resembles the Romish definition, and asserts that "sacraments ordained of Christ be not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they be sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace and God's good will towards us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him." Some have termed the sacraments "positive institutions," as distinguished from

¹ The Latin vulgate has the term "the sacrament of godliness" instead of "the mystery," 1 Tim. iii. 16; and in an older Latin version, "the woman" is called "sacrament, Babylon the great," Rev. xvii. 5. A sacrament among the Romans denoted a solemn pledge, and especially the military oath. The ecclesiastics adopted it, at an early period of the church, in the sense of *mystery*.

moral duties ; others have styled them “symbolic observances ;” and others “the consecration of a common thing to a sacred purpose ;” while by some again they are designated “federal rites,” “confirming seals,” or “seals of the covenant.” But many supporters of such observances object to all these definitions, as either including too much, or not being correctly applicable.¹

In the twelfth century, it began to be asserted that every ceremony, which was a token or signification of a holy thing, ought to be esteemed a sacrament. About 1144, Hugh St. Victor and Peter Lombard taught that there were seven sacraments, and many united in their views even in the eastern churches. The question remained unsettled for some centuries, but at length this number was established by the Council of Florence held in 1348. They were baptism, confirmation, the eucharist, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction. The Council of Trent, about 1550, pronounced an anathema upon those who say that the sacraments are more or fewer than seven, and upon such as esteem them to be equal in value. It decreed that they all confer grace by the mere administration, (*ex opere operato*) unless resisted by mortal sin in the recipient. That three of them, namely baptism, confirmation and orders, impress an indelible character, and cannot be repeated without sacrilege. That every one is accursed, who shall affirm that penance is not truly a sacrament, instituted for the reconciliation of those who fall into sin after baptism. That it is the duty of all to confess their sins to a priest in secret, at least once a year ; when the priest is to pronounce positive absolution. This secret or auricular confession had been established by the Council of Lateran, in 1215. The Greek and Roman churches still hold the seven as sacraments, and regard them with great veneration, but assign no scriptural ground for this number.

Wicliffe, in the fourteenth century, appears to have acknowledged seven sacraments ; he was however very vague in his definition of the term sacrament, calling it “a token that may be seen of a thing that may not be seen.” The idea of seven was almost universal among the writers on divinity of that period. Becoming more spiritual in his views as he advanced in years, he expressly stated that he did not esteem them all necessary to salvation, and inveighed warmly against the many idle ceremonies used in their administration.²

¹ Dr. Halley on the Sacraments.

² British Biography, vol. i.

Cranmer in his Catechism, published in 1548, maintained the observance of three sacraments; viz., "baptism, the bath of regeneration, or instrument of the second birth; absolution, or the authority of the keys, through which pardon is obtained for sins after baptism; and the holy communion, which administers fresh supplies of grace to the worthy receiver, and enables him to go on from strength to strength."¹ Even in the Confession of Augsburg, the reformers, apparently for fear of divisions, expressed themselves indefinitely as to the number of sacraments and the nature of the Mass.² Soon however they generally rejected five of the rites from the rank of sacraments, retaining as such only two, viz., baptism and the supper. Each of these, on account of the importance long and generally attached to them, demands a serious and more particular consideration. The Anglican church also rejects five out of the seven, alleging this reason,—"for that they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God."³

Great contentions have prevailed at different times among the Romish authorities, as to the nature and effects of the sacraments, and as to the indelible character of three of them. "The whole of what they agreed in," says Dr. Campbell, "amounts to this—that in the unreiterable sacraments as they call them, something, they know not what, is imprinted, they know not how, on something in the soul of the recipient, they know not where, which can never be detected."⁴ Some of the high Roman catholic authorities maintain "that marriage is essentially a sacrament, and that unless it be solemnized as such, its tie is invalid, and the intercourse mere concubinage." To what fearful lengths of illiberality and denunciation does priestly assumption carry its devotees!

*10th Section.—On the two Ceremonies styled Sacraments,
observed by many Protestants.*

Most denominations of protestants consider that there are two religious rites, not of an intrinsic moral nature, appointed by the great Founder of our religion to be observed as sacraments, or edifying, mystical and commemorative ceremonies. "In any

¹ Blunt's Hist. of Reformation in England.

² Waddington's Hist. of the Church.

³ Article 25.

⁴ Dr. Halley on the Sacraments.

sacrament," says one of their advocates, "there is nothing moral, nothing holy, nothing religious, nothing of the less worth, except conscientious obedience to Christ." In the opinion of many episcopal protestants, it is essential to the validity and efficacy of these rites, that they be properly administered by a duly ordained priest or minister; which terms are understood to mean one who has been regularly appointed by a bishop, in the order of apostolical succession. Much superstitious arrogance is comprehended in this dogma; the inference being—that the administration of these rites, by any other than their own ministers, is a presumptuous invasion of religious authority, and therefore unproductive of spiritual benefit. As this supposed apostolical succession has been derived through the Roman catholic priesthood,—the validity of whose ordinations is thus tacitly but distinctly implied, it would seem that such protestants consider the rites in question to be efficacious when performed by Romish priests. As to other denominations, who receive them through unauthorized hands, and still more in respect to those who believe the outward observance to be altogether unnecessary, the rash and uncharitable sentiment is occasionally expressed, that such are " destitute of the seals of Christian promise," and "left to the uncovenanted mercies of God." Many may shrink from entertaining this fearful consequence; but such will do well to consider, whether it be not the natural and necessary inference from their own ideas of the true administration of the sacraments, and of apostolical succession.

The Council of Trent in 1546 decided "that, in administering the sacraments, the minister's intention to do what the church intends is necessary." Hence it was showed that, "if the priest were an infidel or a hypocrite, children must be lost, penitents remain unabsolved, and the people without the communion, according to their own views; and that if one of those children became a priest or bishop, all his acts and those of his successors would be nullified and utterly vain," &c.¹ Many are the doubts and questions to which such views lead. Who, for instance, can pretend to determine whether the minister and each of his spiritual predecessors have been duly ordained? And how can it be discovered whether he is a faithful, sincere servant of Christ? To make the salvation of immortal souls depend on

¹ Scot's Luther and the Reformation.

that Mary had “chosen that good part.” This surely was no mere outward ceremony, but true faith and dependence on him, as the Saviour of the world, which could not subsist in any soul careless of its moral and religious obligations. How then can we assert that other things are still needful, which do not stand on moral ground as the great duties of devotion and of conduct, but which are, as Locke remarks, “in their own nature, and in the ordinary occasions of life, altogether indifferent?” If we look at practical results, we may boldly assert that one of them has been productive of more doubt, contention and bloodshed among professing Christians—of more superstition and idolatry—than any other religious observance whatever!

The strong terms used by most of those called “the Fathers,” seem to imply that they held the notion of baptismal regeneration. Under grossly corrupt forms and ideas, many of them revolting to common sense, were these ceremonies imposed on the acceptance and reverence of the people, either by superstitious, secular rulers, or, what was still worse, by ecclesiastics usurping the secular power with a blind and vindictive zeal. Scarcely a middle course was thus left open, between cold unbelief on the one hand, and fanatical superstition on the other. A senseless conformity in practice characterized both, to the scandal of the Christian religion.

A sacrament is defined by the English episcopal church,—and the definition, though by no means clear, is probably admitted by many others,—to be “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof.”¹ This description would clearly include confirmation, according to the views of the same church. Yet though conferred only by her higher dignitaries, which would seem to stamp it with a higher character, she does not entitle this a sacrament; any more than absolution, where pardoning grace is positively assumed to be conferred; or ordination, where the Holy Ghost is professed to be communicated. Even “evil men, if lawfully consecrated,” are held to be capable instruments of performing these solemn rites, “by Christ’s commission and authority.”²

Dr. Edward Stillingfleet, afterwards Bishop of Worcester,

¹ See Catechism.

² Halley on Sacraments.

published in 1660 his "Irenicum, or a Weapon Salve for the church's Wounds," in which he attempted to prove that no one form of church government is specially of Divine right, and that the church had no power to impose things indifferent. "The design of our Saviour," he says in the preface, "was to ease men of their former burdens, and not to lay on more. The duties he required were only such as were necessary, just and reasonable. He that came to take away the insupportable yoke of Jewish ceremonies, certainly did never intend to gall the neck of his disciples with another instead of it; and it would be strange the church should require more than Christ himself did." He remarked that "religion should not be clogged with ceremonies; for that when they are multiplied too much, though lawful, they eat out the heart, life and vigour of christianity." Stillingfleet, however, afterwards forsook these great principles, and instead of promoting freedom and charity, became a fierce persecutor of those who thought as he had formerly done.¹

The views of the Puseyite party in the Anglican church are thus described by one of their number in 1851. "I understand the doctrine of the sacraments to be this:—1st, That man is "made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven," in and by holy baptism. 2nd, That man, "made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven" in and by holy baptism, is renewed from time to time in holy communion. 3rd, That "a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness," is [are] given to every adult and to every infant, in and by the outward visible sign or form in baptism "water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." 4th, That the gift may be received in the case of adults, worthily or unworthily, but that it is always received. 5th, That the body and blood of Christ are given to every one who receives the sacrament of bread and wine. 6th, That the gift may be received worthily or unworthily, but that it is always received."²

The evangelical party, or most of them, maintain on the contrary, that grace is not inseparable from the sacraments, but is frequently or occasionally communicated by them, as by one

¹ Neal's Puritans.

² From a pamphlet, entitled "Why should the Bishops continue to sit in the House of Lords?" by G. A. Denison, M.A."

of several means designed for the conversion and salvation of men.¹

To consider "the sacraments" as the causes, or the means, or even the personal seals of spiritual and saving grace, is virtually, as remarked by a modern author,² to oppose the great Protestant doctrine of justification by faith. Man has no true ground to believe that that pure and omniscient Being, with whom we have to do, grants the seal of his approbation and of his covenant without discrimination, to be appropriated by the evil or the good, the unbeliever or the believer at their own pleasure. The seal of his covenant is the grace of his Holy Spirit,³ leading to "depart from iniquity," and bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, to the good of his creatures, to the salvation of the individual, and to his own glory. The doctrine of the sacraments introduces an additional and entirely different element as essential to human salvation; beside Christ's merits, and the teachings of his Spirit, on the one hand, producing repentance, and faith in him, on the other.

"The Judaism," says Dr. Arnold, "which upheld circumcision, and insisted on the difference of meats, did, even within the first century, transfuse its spirit into a Christian form, and substituting baptism for circumcision, and the mystic influence of the bread and wine for the doctrine of purifying and defiling meats, did thereby, as has happened many times since, pervert Christianity to a fatal extent."⁴—"I call all this Judaism direct idolatry; it is exalting the church and the sacraments into the place of Christ, as some have exalted his mother, and others in the same spirit exalted circumcision."⁵

It may be argued, that the abuse of a doctrine or observance affords no valid objection to its use. But when the abuse is flagrant and general, and the use and original institution are highly questionable, sufficient ground is afforded for much more deep consideration and inquiry, than have yet been bestowed on this view of such ceremonies.

Much truthful meaning is contained in the expression of the Apostle Paul on the subject of outward observances or rites, when he terms them "weak and beggarly elements;" that is,

¹ Halley on the Sacraments, Lecture 2.

³ 2 Tim. ii. 19.

⁴ Arnold's Letters.

² Dr. Halley.

⁵ Ibid.

as it may be presumed, having no moral virtue or real strength in themselves, but dependent entirely on the estimate or use made of them. With the Galatians, who having “begun in the spirit,” were seeking to be “made perfect by the flesh,” earnestly did he expostulate that they might “not be brought again into bondage.”¹ “Baptism he stated was not his office, and yet the communication of spiritual gifts was an important part of his work, and the impartation of the Spirit the chief and manifest proof of his apostleship.”²

The author submits these considerations to the candid and serious judgment of his fellow-believers; being fully assured, at the same time, that many use such ceremonies conscientiously, under the apprehension that they were commanded by Christ, and that they themselves have derived from them spiritual grace and strength. Yet these must remember that “he is not a Jew that is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God;”³ and that Christians “are sealed,” not with outward ceremonies, but “with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.”⁴

11th Section.—On Baptism and Sprinkling with Water.

The reader is requested distinctly to observe, that many or most of the individuals, whose opinions are about to be quoted with reference to water-baptism and the supper, although they expressed the views following, did still generally approve of those ceremonies, but being not quite consistent nor free from hesitation, differed chiefly as to their character, details and effects.

Baptism with water was anciently used among both Israelites and heathens. Justin Martyr and the Talmud agree that this was one of the Jewish rites on initiating proselytes, and also a sign or mode of legal purification. Thus we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, of their “divers washings,”¹ or baptisms. Fleury

¹ Gal. ii. 4, &c.

² Dr. Halley, Lecture 4.

³ Romans ii. 28, 29.

⁴ Eph. iv. 30.

asserts, on the authority of Maimonides, that water "baptism, and the ancient ceremonies which the church observed in it were all borrowed from the Jews."²

Ovid, in the second book of his *Fasti*, mentions several instances of eminent heathens, who had committed manslaughter, resorting, in the month of the Februal sacrifices, to ablution in certain rivers, to wash away their crimes. This practice, he says, *had* been derived from the Greeks, but his comment is worthy of observation,—"Ah too credulous! who think that the foul crime of murder can be taken away by the water of a river." Other classical authors refer to the same mode of purgation. The Brahmins still baptize in the Ganges, as a religious ceremony; and other heathen nations observe the rite in some way or other.

It is fully admitted that water baptism, as a token of initiation into fellowship, was used by the apostles of our Lord, both before and after his death. Yet he himself did not practise it, and Paul asserts that he was not sent to perform it,³ nor does it appear that the disciples themselves received it, or that Christ enjoined its reception upon believers. Outward ceremonies, originally of divine appointment, are termed "carnal ordinances,"⁴ "rudiments of the world,"⁵ weak elements,⁶ &c., &c.

Most of the early Christian ministers are represented to have outwardly baptized their converts by immersion in rivers, or in other open places appointed for the purpose; but the authority to baptize was soon limited to the bishops alone. These afterwards conferred it upon the presbyters and others, reserving to themselves the confirmation of the baptism, when so administered, or the imposition of hands, which originally formed part of the ceremony.⁷ Many of the Christians who had been Jews differed widely from the Gentile believers in the observance of religious rites.

In the second century, converts were baptized twice in the

¹ Heb. ix. 10.

² In the account of Philip's conference with the eunuch, the 37th verse, "And Philip said unto him," &c., is generally considered to be an interpolation. *Acts viii.*

³ John iv. 2, and 1 Cor. i. 17.

⁴ Heb. ix. 10.

⁵ Col. ii. 8, 20.

⁶ Gal. iv. 9.

⁷ Neander's Church Hist., vol. i.

year, "at the great feasts of Easter and Whitsuntide." They professed their belief, renounced their sins, and promised to live in obedience to the gospel; they were then immersed three times, and declared to be received into Christ's kingdom by the invocation of God. They received the sign of the cross, were anointed with oil, and by prayer and imposition of hands were dedicated to the Lord; receiving salt, milk and honey as little children, and as inheriting a new Canaan.¹

In this century, the Ascodrutea rejected the use of all external symbols or sacraments.² About the same time Irenaeus mentions Christians, termed Valentinians, who disused the ceremonies of baptism and the supper, saying that the mystery of the unspeakable, invisible power ought not to be performed by visible and corruptible elements: nor that of incomprehensible and incorporeal things to be represented by sensible and corporeal things; but that the true knowledge of the unspeakable majesty is itself perfect redemption or baptism.³ Justin Martyr observed "The only baptism that can heal us is repentance and the knowledge of God. What need is there of that baptism, which can only cleanse the flesh and the body? Be washed in your flesh from wrath and covetousness, from envy and hatred; and behold the body is pure."⁴ Clemens Alexandrinus remarked, on the proverb "Be not pure in the laver, but in the mind,"—"I suppose an exact and firm repentance is a sufficient purification; judging and considering ourselves for the deeds we have done, cleansing the mind from sensual affections and former sins."

Irenaeus about 180, is considered by many to be the first teacher in the church who made any allusion to infant baptism.⁵ Tertullian wrote a book on baptism, against the doctrine of Quintilla, a female minister, who had been at Carthage a little before, and taught that water baptism was needless, and that faith alone was sufficient; to whom he intimates that many adhered. He alleged that faith and repentance were required of the baptized; that the ceremony was of no efficacy without these, of which infants are by necessity incapable, and he pleaded strongly against baptizing them, as also against bap-

¹ Mosheim's 2nd Cent. 4—13. ² Bingham's Christ. Antiq. xv. 2, 9.

³ Neander's History, vol. i. 312; Tertullian on Baptism, lib. i. cap. 10.

⁴ To Trypho the Jew; Taylor's Life of Christ; and Dr. Halley.

⁵ Ibid. vol. i.

tizing unmarried persons.¹ Dissuading against haste in baptism, he remarks that "true faith, wherever present, is sure of salvation;" also that "the soul is not consecrated by the water, but by the truth professed."² Unction was used in confirmation, and first mentioned by Tertullian.

In the third century great darkness prevailed; the apostacy had made sensible progress, and in many places, traditions and inventions were multiplied and sanctioned by the churches. The tendency to confound the inward with the outward, the inclination to the magical, the fondness for pomp and display, caused the forms of exorcism, which had been employed in the cases of those demoniacally possessed, to be introduced into the baptism of the heathens. The first unequivocal trace of it is found in the acts of a council held at Carthage in 256.³ Exorcists were soon afterward constituted a separate order, their office being to adjure evil spirits from those supposed to be possessed. The rite of exorcism was made preparatory to that of baptism, to which none were admitted, till they were considered by the cries and shouts of the exorcist, to be delivered from the prince of darkness. The baptized returned home with crowns and white robes, in token of their victory over Satan, and purification from sin. Baptism was deemed an indispensable preparation for the supper, and essential to salvation; this last idea soon led to its being conferred on infants. The remission of all past sins was thought to be its immediate result.⁴

"Many of those who joined the church," says Neander of its early period, "bringing their pagan notions over with them into christianity, sought in baptism a magical lustration, which could render them at once entirely pure. Their longing after reconciliation with God remained covered under a grossly material form, and they sought in Christ, not a Saviour from sin, but a bestower of an outward and magical annihilation of it."⁵ How much of this grossly material view still finds a place in Christian churches!

Great contention arose in the third century, between the Asiatic and Western churches, as to the necessity of re-baptizing heretics, or those who had fallen into sin, before their restoration to the church. About the year 250, a council of seventy

¹ Neander's History, vol. i.

² *De resur. carnis.*

³ Ibid. 1st period, 3rd section.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

North African bishops, held at Carthage under Agrippinus, decided that baptism by heretics was of no avail ; and that, on joining the orthodox church, a fresh baptism was necessary. Two synods, held also at Carthage under Cyprian soon after, confirmed this judgment. The Roman party maintained that the life or doctrines of the minister were no impediment to true baptism. The African and Asiatic churches supported the opposite opinion, and the contention was long and serious. Cyprian and Tertullian declared that the water ought to be first cleansed and sanctified by the priest, that it might have power by baptism to wash away sin.¹

Cyprian seems to have been one of the first who gave countenance to the practice of sprinkling ; which he permitted only in cases of sick or aged persons, whom it might be unsafe to immerse ; requiring that baptism should be administered to such as well as it could, if no more than by sprinkling. These were called *clinici*, being mostly sprinkled on a couch or bed ; (from *clinicus*, a bed-rid person,) many thought this mode imperfect and invalid, and the church prohibited such from receiving ordination. At that time it was usual to defer the rite of water baptism till mature or advanced age, that the individual might not be placed under the restraints of religion in youth, nor fall again into sin ; but might depart pure and blameless.² Thus Constantine was baptized in his illness, when about sixty-five years old, and died a few days after. Some however allege other reasons for his having deferred the ceremony so long. Basil in the fourth century, Theodosius, and many other eminent persons, did not receive baptism till they had become aged. In times of public calamity or danger, the people hurried in crowds to be baptized.³

When the baptism of children was introduced, it appears not to have been generally performed before they had received instruction, and had given evidence of religious impressions being made on their hearts. Several of "the fathers," as Origen and Ambrose, asserted that the custom of baptizing infants was received from Christ and the Apostles ; this however is one of the many traditions and bold assertions of that period for which there is no evidence.⁴ Neander remarks, that "we have all

¹ Neander's Hist., vol. i.

² Ibid, vols. i. and ii.

³ Neander, 1st & 2nd periods, 3rd section. ⁴ Neander's 1st period, 3rd sec.

reason for not deriving infant baptism from apostolic institution," and that of this a proof is found in the fact, that it was first recognized in the third century.

About 248, a bishop named Fidus recommended the baptism of young children, according to the manner of circumcision, when they were eight days old, under the impression that the one rite had been substituted for the other. The idea being at that time new or undecided, Cyprian could not conclude upon it without a general consultation; and the bishops and elders being summoned together in council at Carthage about 254, it was ordained that children should "be timely baptized, as well before as after the eighth day." Many parents and others objecting that it was an unfit ceremony for a child, and endangered the health, Gregory Nazianzen recommended that the baptism of children should be deferred till they were three years old. Only those who were sick or delicate were at first allowed to be merely sprinkled: at length however it became the common practice. Cassander states, that the baptism of infants began to be much used by the fathers who lived about three hundred years after the Apostles. It was a very natural consequence of admitting the doctrines of original sin and of the necessity of water baptism to salvation. There is good ground however to infer, from the circumstance of many pious and eminent persons not being baptized even then till late in life, that the custom was by no means general till after that date. Thus, the practice of sprinkling infants, the children of believing parents, grew to be held indispensable to the obtaining everlasting life, and was introduced, step by step, into the Christian churches.

Though many of the advocates for infant baptism have contended that it was substituted for circumcision, yet neither this rite nor any other was understood by the Israelites to convey regeneration. Were they then unregenerated? or did they receive the grace of regeneration without a ceremony? And if so, is christianity more dependent than Judaism on outward observances? Such would appear to be the strange but necessary conclusion of those who plead for baptismal regeneration.

If it be acknowledged that, the water baptism used in the first churches, was by immersion—and there seems little or no

¹ Neander, 1st period, 3rd section.

doubt of the fact—it must be admitted that there was ground for the opinion entertained by some in the third century, that the substitution of mere sprinkling, and the general administration of it to infants, were a great falling off, and a very imperfect fulfilment of this apprehended religious institution. If it was one of such imperative and sacred obligation, they thought it but reasonable to conclude that it ought to be strictly and fully complied with, in the same manner as other ceremonial observances. The contrary practice in this respect goes far to show that, after all, the spirit and not the letter, the substance and not the form, was a great principle still acknowledged even by degenerate Christians, according to the general scope of the gospel dispensation.

The adult converts from Judaism and heathenism still continued for a time to be baptized by immersion. The individual wore a veil for some days previously, and used his former clothes, till he stripped to enter into the water; on coming out of it, he renounced the devil, made a profession of faith, promised obedience to Christ, and attired himself in new white garments. These were a token that he had put off the filthy rags of sin, the old man with his deeds, and had now put on the new man, the white raiment of righteousness and salvation. The clothes were previously exorcised, and passed through several ceremonies, but were worn only for a week. Even to the present day, some traces are found of these parts of the ceremony, in the terms of "Whit-Sunday" and "Whitsuntide," and in the colour of the infant's head-dress.¹ The renunciation of the devil was made by the catechumen or baptized person three times, with his face toward the west; the other parts of the ceremony he performed with his face to the east.²

To go back again to the second century. Such was the darkness then prevailing on religious matters, that some African churches, the Cataphrygians and Montanists, baptized the dead bodies of those who had not received the rite while living, and put the sacramental bread in their mouths, as a *viaticum*, or means of their reaching heaven. This practice was noticed by the third Council of Carthage, as one which certain ignorant Christians were fond of.³

The Marcionites and Cerinthians used a sort of vicarious baptism, and when a person had died unbaptized, allowed some

¹ Neander's Hist., vol. i.

² Bingham.

³ Bingham's Christ. Antiq.

one present to represent him, and receive the rite of baptism on his behalf. Many zealous persons were baptized at the graves of martyrs, to testify that with Christ they were dead to sin, and for him were ready to die. One religious sect in Africa, called Habbasines, baptized themselves once a year in lakes or ponds. The Jacobites in Asia gave a literal interpretation to Christ's words, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire," and marked their children at baptism with a hot iron, in the face, on the ears, or on the arm. Valentinus, in the second century, rebaptized all who had received water baptism, and conferred on them the baptism of fire. Others thought that fire should be in some way or other joined to the water; and it is supposed that they caused the person to pass between two fires, or to leap through the flame, or that they used lighted torches.¹ The Seleucians taught that baptism is not to be received by water, and substituted a mode of baptism with fire.²

A certain Jew is said to have been baptized in the wilderness with sand, for want of water, but was ordered by the Bishop of Ascalon to be rebaptized, because water was deemed essential. Yet the baptism of an infant with wine, in case of necessity, was decreed by Stephen II. to be valid. And a circumstance is seriously related by Socrates and other historians, of some boys of Alexandria, who, having been regularly baptized on the sea-shore in play by another boy, were not permitted by the bishop to undergo the rite again, their juvenile performance being held to be sufficient.³

Some of the Gnostics consistently with their notions celebrated baptism as a wedding, and decorated the place like a bridal chamber, using a long and mysterious formula.⁴

Rebaptization being considered a crime, hypothetical baptism was administered in doubtful cases, with these words, "If thou art baptized, I do not re-baptize; if thou art not, I baptize thee, in the name of the Father," &c.⁵

After many discussions, a council at Carthage decided in 340, that heretics should not be re-baptized. About this time, the unconditional necessity of infant baptism was admitted in the North African church;⁶ but still the practice was not general.

The mother of Augustine objected to his being baptized when

¹ A. Clarke on Matthew iii. 11.

² Neander and Augustine.

³ Bingham's Christ. Antiq.

⁴ Encyc. Brit.

⁵ Neander, 1st period, sect. 3.

⁶ Neander, vol. ii.

young, lest he should afterwards fall into sin; and he did not undergo the ceremony till the thirtieth year of his age, 391. Yet he regretted this, and having been consulted by some who wished to know his opinion, he asserted that "infants which depart out of the world without having partaken of the sacrament of holy baptism are damned, being guilty of original sin." He is said to have been the first eminent person who publicly preached this doctrine. He also advocated the necessity of administering the eucharist to them. Other fathers of that period entertained a similar view in respect to both rites; yet the dipping or sprinkling of infants appears not then to have been generally adopted. The necessity of infant baptism was decreed, on pain of anathema, by ninety-two bishops in the Milevitan provincial council, held in Africa about 402, and was finally confirmed by a general council at Carthage in 416. The canon of this council has these words, "Infants are truly baptized for remission of their sins; that what they derive by generation may be cleansed by regeneration." Some assert that the former council was held at Malta.¹

Augustine, in his work on baptism, mentioned Christians of an earlier age, who said that baptism in water did good to no one. He reprobated the dangerous notion of the possibility of baptized persons being saved in their sins: but he says that "the fire of exorcism" always preceded baptism. Ambrose thought "the form of baptism sufficient, if only one person of the Trinity were named; but the general opinion and practice of the church embraced the mention of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." Great differences of sentiment prevailed however, as to the form and circumstances of administering the rite,² each party anathematizing the rest.

"The fathers" were also sadly perplexed with the inquiry, Who baptized the Apostles? seeing it is declared that "Jesus baptized not."³ The question is one that never can be affirmatively answered, and is only one of many difficulties attending the outward view of Christian baptism.

It was currently taught in the fifth century, that the effect of water baptism was the certain salvation of the soul; an opinion which, considering that its subjects were mostly adults, largely

¹ See Hanmer's Chronol., Taylor's Liberty of Prophecy, &c.

² Bingham's Christ. Antiq. ³ John iv. 2.

tended to destroy the great doctrine of justification by faith, and to pervert the Gospel ; by exhibiting a mechanical kind of christianity, which might exist without any personal experience of the favour of God, without any conscious union with Christ or power over sin.¹

Jovinian held that those who had received true baptism were safe, and could not fall into the temptations of the devil. Theodoret speaks of some Christians, called Ascodrutæ, a sort of Gnostics, who said that no profit accrued to those baptized ; and he states that several noted men were of that opinion. He condemned such, and also the Eunomians, who used only one immersion, contrary at that time to the general practice of the church.

The rite of water baptism, as has already been remarked, was at first performed in rivers or fountains. Hence the word "font" was introduced, for a vessel containing "baptismal water;" or it may have implied the source of spiritual life. It was superstitiously termed by some "the mother of adoption." Fonts were adorned with figures and pictures, that those who were baptized might have good patterns before their eyes. In times of persecution, such vessels were sometimes placed in private houses or in retired situations. At length, in the fifth century, it became customary to set them in the porch, and finally in "the church itself." Oratories and small chapels termed baptisteries, adjoining the churches, or over springs of water, were also used for the performance of baptism ; the use of private houses for the purpose being strictly forbidden.

"It is the key of the sacraments" said Gaudentius, "that opens the gate of heaven,"—an opinion which is still maintained. The administration of baptism by an illiterate priest who used false latin, was received with apprehension by many, the virtue of the sacrament being deemed to depend on the correctness of the terms employed.

The practice of administering both confirmation and the eucharist, together with the rite of baptism, to infants, prevailed extensively in early times, and was continued for at least 300 years.²

The souls of infants unbaptized were declared to be received into a place called "*Limbus Infantum* ;" the rites of "Christian burial" were not used for any unbaptized, but their bodies were interred "in an unhallowed place."

¹ Smith's Religion of Ancient Britain.

² Bingham.

In the French and Spanish churches, baptism was for a long period performed only "at the festival at Easter," except when infants were ill.¹ A council at Gerunda in Spain afterwards decreed that baptism, or "remission of sins," as it was sometimes termed, should be administered only "at Easter and Whitsuntide," unless necessity should require otherwise.² At these holiday times large numbers received the ceremony.

To persons of certain descriptions baptism was not extended; such as image-makers and stage-players, gladiators and gamesters, astrologers and charmers, frequenters of games and theatres, including those in the army and in concubinage. The Marcionites refused baptism to all married persons. In some cases Jews and Heathens were by arbitrary zealots compelled, under pain of confiscation of goods, to submit to the rite of baptism, till at length the Council of Toledo prohibited this use of antichristian compulsion.³

The primitive British churches strongly objected to the Roman method of performing water baptism, introduced by Austin in 597;⁴ but the nature of their objection does not appear. Ina, king of the West Saxons, ordained, about 692, that every infant should be baptized within thirty days from the birth, under penalty of thirty shillings, to be paid by the parents; or of the whole estate, if the child died unbaptized—a very arbitrary and superstitious edict. Bede, who is styled the "Venerable," declared his belief, that an unconscious infant is saved in baptism, through the faith of its parents and god-parents. A council held in Britain, in 816, enacted that infants should be immersed in the font, and that water should not be poured on their heads only. Ancient fonts of large size for this purpose still remain. For a long period they received usually three immersions, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and King Edward VI. issued an ordinance to this effect.

To return again to an early period: Justin Martyr, in the second century, speaking of the method of baptizing, makes no allusion to sponsors; but these soon followed the rite of baptizing infants, who were incapable of answering for themselves, or confessing their faith. Tertullian refers with disapprobation

¹ Bingham's Christ. Antiq.

² Hanmer; Neander, vol. ii. 272.

³ Bingham.

⁴ Bingham's Christ. Antiq.

⁵ Blunt's Reformation in England.

to infant baptism and sponsors, remarking that the latter undertake what they may never be able to fulfil. It was an ancient practice, for one man or one woman to attend at the baptism of an infant, according to the sex, and undertake as sureties for his or her proper instruction. The parents were usually considered the proper parties; but other "godparents" were required under Charlemagne. Persons of mature age who were baptized were also accompanied by "godfathers and godmothers;" and these in the fourth century were often the deacons or deaconesses of the church, who were expected to instruct and prepare the ignorant. Godfathers and godmothers, being called "gossips," were considered to have acquired a spiritual relationship to the infant and to one another; so that it was ordained by Justinian and certain councils in the sixth and seventh centuries, after two sureties had become common for each child, that they might not marry with each other, or with the person or child baptized, or with either surviving parent of the child; and even that the baptizer should not marry the person baptized, on account of the sacred affinity said to have been contracted at the font. This strange idea gave rise to numerous regulations, difficulties, and absurdities, and was rejected by the early protestant reformers, but it is still upheld in the Greek if not in the Romish church. The gossips formerly put on white garments, as well as the priest and the baptized person or child. In Britain, and in some other parts, for every male child, two godfathers and one godmother are still required; and for every female child, two godmothers and one godfather. The 29th Anglican canon enjoins, that "no parent shall be admitted to answer as godfather for his own child, nor shall be urged to be present. Neither shall any person be admitted godfather before he has received the holy communion." The Scotch altogether reject the use of godfathers and godmothers, as one of the corruptions of the dark ages. "Should it be said that the infant believes by its sponsors, we reply," says Dr. Halley, "that with as much countenance from Scripture it may be said, it is regenerated in its sponsors."¹

The Paulicians, who in the eighth and ninth centuries were a considerable sect in Asia Minor and Italy, "maintained that it was not Christ's intention to institute baptism by water as a perpetual ordinance; but that by baptism he meant only that of the

¹ Lecture v.

Spirit, by whose teachings he communicates himself as the living water, for the thorough cleansing of man. They combated the inclination to rely on the magical effects of external forms, particularly the sacraments."¹

To receive any payment for baptism, for the eucharist, for confirmation, for burying, for consecration of churches, or for other like spiritual offices, was deemed by the ancients a sort of simony; and it was prohibited by several councils.

The absurd and superstitious practice, which had found its way into the corrupt church, of extending the rite of baptism to inanimate things, as bells and the like, is mentioned in the capitulary of Charlemagne with disapprobation; but afterwards it was acknowledged in the offices of the church, and continued for several hundred years. Pretended godfathers were appointed, who made responses; a new garment was put on, and other ridiculous ceremonies were used.² The baptism of bells is still practised in Italy, and being considered a very important ceremony, is performed only by the bishops.³

Charlemagne, adopting the Mahometan principle, enforced baptism with the edge of the sword on some of the heathen nations of Germany; as soon however as they were left to themselves, they returned to the pagan rites with increased zeal.⁴ Similar measures were resorted to, at later periods, towards several of the northern tribes, who were brought to the profession of christianity by artifices and violence.

The Marcionites and some other sects allowed baptism to be performed by women, in opposition to the general practice. Laymen were not permitted to baptize, except in cases of urgency. Many great disputes arose as to the parties who had a right to perform the ceremony; but the baptism even by schismatics was generally held to be valid. The Romish ritual allows baptism to be administered in case of necessity, not only by a catholic layman or woman, but also by a Jew, a pagan, or an infidel. Among episcopal protestants, a nurse or any other "lay person" is authorised under pressure of illness to sprinkle a child; otherwise the rite is not considered to be duly performed, unless by a minister ordained by the bishop; consequently baptism by nonconformist ministers must be held to be invalid.

¹ Neander's Hist.

² Bingham's Christ. Antiq.

³ Achilli's Dealings with the Inquisition.

⁴ Neander's Hist.

The following ceremonies commonly took place in the Romish church at the baptism of a child. 1st. The priest breathed three times on the infant's face, which was termed the insufflation, to denote the communication of the Holy Ghost. 2nd. He anointed his eyes, ears and nostrils, with earth moistened with saliva, saying Ephphatha. 3rd. He named him, and marked him with the sign of the cross, on the breast and back, with holy oil; exorcising him, or abjuring the devil to go out of him, and come at him no more. 4th. Three times he dipped him into the water, or, if weak, sprinkled water upon him, in form of a cross. 5th. Putting his thumb in the chrism or holy ointment, he marked the forehead with the sign of the cross, using the imposition of hands, and praying for the unction of the Holy Ghost. 6th. He covered him with a white garment as a token of innocence. And 7th. He put into his hand a burning candle, as an emblem of light and glory! Nearly the same superstitious proceedings took place in the baptism of adults, and were practised, as was said, in the fulfilment of Christ's commands, or of apostolical traditions!¹

Before water was used for baptism the priest consecrated it by prayer, and by holy ointment with the sign of the cross. "The very same change was supposed thus to be wrought in the waters of baptism, as on the bread and wine in the eucharist. Not only the presence of the Spirit, but also the mystical presence of Christ's blood, was believed to attend after consecration!"² According with this notion is the language of the Puseyite poem, "The Christian Year," in reference to the water of baptism:—

"What sparkles in that lucid flood
Is water, by gross mortals eyed;
But seen by faith, 'tis blood
Out of a dear Friend's side."

It was held that the sacrament of baptism, like circumcision, once administered, could not be erased, and ought not to be repeated; while that of the eucharist or mass, like the passover, was to be repeated often.³ The one was deemed necessary to produce the new birth and spiritual life, the other to nourish and sustain it, by the feeding on the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ. Without a regularly ordained priest, these indispensable benefits, it was declared, could not be received.

¹ Bingham's Christ. Antiq.

² Ibid.

³ Halley on the Sacraments.

Thus the self-styled successors of Peter assumed to keep the keys of heaven : whom they would they professed to have power to admit, and whom they would to exclude. Their own faith or morality was not considered necessary to the validity of their performances ! And these views, be it remembered, were not confined to the ignorant and most superstitious, but were for centuries the avowed doctrines of the church, and of most of those who are renowned as its early fathers. As such, they were sternly enforced by secular authority. Papists, and even some professed protestants, still cling to them. Nearly the same effects are by many now attributed to water baptism as formerly : viz., forgiveness of sins, regeneration, spiritual light, and salvation. It was deemed the most full absolution and indulgence.

In the eleventh century, Robert, King of France, caused to be burnt at the stake, thirteen of the clergy and nobles of the city of Orleans, for denying the outward baptism and supper.¹ Some of the adherents of Gundulph of Italy, coming into Flanders and being examined by the Bishop of Cambray, denied that water baptism could do any good to infants ; and farther confessed that they thought it of no use to any one, infant or adult. The following, being some of the sentiments held by these parties, and by the protestant mountaineers in the south of France, were condemned by a synod at Arras in 1025 : That the sacrament of baptism was useless, and of no efficacy to salvation ; that the Lord's supper was equally unnecessary, that there was no peculiar sanctity in churches, nor in the altar ; that the use of bells, &c., was objectionable ; that the various orders of the church were not of divine institution ; and that its rites of sepulture are to be ascribed to the avarice of the clergy.² Berenger, and Bishop Bruno, two eminent men in France, bore public testimony against infant baptism, and that termed "the real presence." The doctrine spread through France and Germany, and its professors were called Berengarians, Waldenses, &c.³

In the twelfth century many enlightened persons expressed objections to infant baptism. Peter Abelard opposed this rite and was burned at Rome for his testimony. Peter de Bruys, of France, and Henry and Arnold, of Italy, taught against infant

¹ Milner's Hist.

² Waddington's Hist.

³ Baron. Ann.

baptism, transubstantiation, &c.; for which the first was committed to the flames, the second to prison where he died, and the third was executed. Their followers were very numerous, and were called "Cathari," or the Pure.¹ Exbert of Germany wrote a treatise, in 1160, against the Cathari, of whom he says, "They hold that water baptism is of no avail to salvation." These people subsisted for several centuries.² The Massalians or Euchites in the East, sometimes also termed Bogomiles, continued for a long period, and refrained from baptism, from the Lord's supper, and other external rites of worship; placing the essence of religion in prayer. This sect was numerous, and is said to have been founded by Lucopetrus. The terms Cathari and Massalians became general and invidious appellations for such eastern Christians as opposed the vicious practices, corrupt forms and tyranny of the priesthood.³ William of Newbury mentions thirty religious persons, who came into England from Germany in 1170, and denied baptism and the eucharist. The chief of them were Gerard and Dulcimus. They were probably some of the early Waldenses. About this time was raised up a people in the province of Albi, in France, thence called Albigenses, of whom some declared that infant baptism was not necessary. The Waldenses became generally known about the same period. They laid little stress on the outward baptism and supper, finding fault with the papists for relying too much on these things. Reyner their historian says, "Some of them hold that baptism of material water and other sacraments profit nothing to salvation." Both they and the Albigenses used great simplicity in their mode of worship; and for testifying against the corruptions imposed by the ruling powers, they were hunted down and massacred without mercy.⁴

Although the baptism of infants had long been general, yet some writers assert that Innocent III., who founded the Inquisition, and sanctioned the doctrine of transubstantiation, was the first who fully established it, by ratifying the Milevitan Canon, at the Council of Lateran in 1215, which has been elsewhere referred to.

In the fourteenth century enlightened sentiments continued to make progress. The citizens of Frankfort-on-the-Oder, having

¹ Baron. Ann.

² Milner's Church History, Dupin, &c.

³ Encyc. Brit.

⁴ Jones's Hist. Waldenses, &c.

resisted their ecclesiastical superiors, were excommunicated, and remained for twenty-eight years without baptism or other rites. The return of the priests to perform their accustomed ceremonies seems to have been regarded as a farce.¹ The author of "The Ploughman's Complaint," under a more spiritual view of our Saviour's command, thus expresses himself:—"Ah, Lord, thou badest thy disciples go and fullen (or purify) all the folk, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, in forgiveness of their sins."² Wicliffe declared, "They which affirm that the children of the faithful dying without baptism are not saved, are presumptuous and foolish." Walter Brute, an eminent English reformer before referred to, denied that baptism with water is necessary to salvation, or that anything more is required than repentance and faith in Christ. "Faith," says he, "is a spiritual water, springing from Him, the Fountain of wisdom, wherein the soul of the sinner is washed from sin. With this water were the faithful patriarchs baptized before the law; and the faithful people of the Hebrews and the faithful Christians after the law. Many Christians are saved without the sacrament of baptism in water. Are not all baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire? but not with material fire. Thus, no more is the lotion of water corporally necessary to wash away sins, but only spiritual water; that is to say, the water of faith."³ Many of the Lollards, a numerous body in England, declared their belief that infants dying unbaptized are saved, in opposition to the opinion then generally held.

The increase of religious light in the sixteenth century produced clearer views on this and other subjects; but the difference between the Roman catholics and the reformers was not generally so great on this point as on the "eucharist." Both parties upheld the outward baptismal rite, differing chiefly as to its administration and effects. Erasmus, Bucer, Melancthon, and many other eminent men, declared that infant baptism is not plainly authorized by scripture. William Tyndal maintained "that the water of the font hath no more virtue in it than any other water, as that of the river Rhine: that the water of baptism doth not take away sin, for then were it a precious water indeed, and then it behoved us daily to wash therein.

¹ D'Aubigné's History.

² Fox, *Acts and Mon.* vol. i.

³ Fox, vol. i.

The virtue of baptism lieth not," said he, "in hallowed water, or in the outward things at the font, but in faith only." Among the opinions attributed to him and his followers was this,—that infants are holy and clean, though they have not received baptism.¹ Calvin remarks expressly, that infant baptism is not mentioned by any of the Evangelists, and he doubted, if he did not deny, the duty of the practice. "I must ingenuously profess," said Zwingle, "that almost all who have undertaken to write of baptism, even from the very times of the apostles, have erred in not a few things from the scope." Of infant baptism he says, "There are no plain words of Scripture by which the same is commanded." If thou be baptized a thousand times with water and have not faith," said John Frith, an English reformer, "it availeth thee no more towards God, than it doth a goose when she ducketh herself under the water. In the apostolic baptism there was neither font, holy water, earth, cream, oil, salt, godfather nor godmother."² The centuriators of Magdeburg remark, in their learned history, that they find no example in the scriptures of baptizing infants. They also declared against holy water, fonts, exorcisms, anointing, confirmation &c., which, they said, were not used in the primitive times.

The Anabaptists sprang up in Germany about the time of the Reformation. Many of them settled in England soon after, having been driven from their own country by contentions and persecution. Believing the baptism of infants, as well as that administered by the Romish priests, to be invalid, they re-baptized all who joined them, and hence arose their name. Some were called gentle or moderate, while others denied the peaceable principles of the gospel, and broke out into violence. Of these, some were examined and executed, contrary to the wishes of the people at large, in the generally mild reign of Edward VI.³ Such were the consequences, even under a moderate ruler, of daring to differ from the established system.

The form of baptism, enacted by the liturgy published as late as that reign, contained this exorcising clause:—"Then let the priest, looking upon the children, say, 'I command thee, unclean spirit, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, that thou come out and depart from these infants, whom

¹ Fox's Martyrs, vol. ii. ² Puritans in England. ³ Burnet's History.

our Lord Jesus Christ hath vouchsafed to call to his holy baptism, to be made members of his body and of his holy congregation; therefore thou cursed spirit remember thy sentence, remember thy judgment, and the day to be at hand wherein thou shalt burn in fire everlasting, prepared for thee and thy angels; and presume not hereafter to exercise any tyranny towards these infants, whom Christ hath bought with his precious blood, and by this his holy baptism called to be of his flock.'"¹

Thomas Hawkes of Essex, a zealous protestant, suffered at Coggeshall in the year of blood 1555, for firm adherence to his religious principles. On his long examination by Harpsfield before Bishop Bonner, among other remarks are the following: Bishop.—“This is the man that I told you of, that would not have his child christened, neither will he have any ceremonies.” Harpsfield.—“Christ used ceremonies. Did he not take clay from the ground, and spittle, and make the blind man see?” Hawkes.—“I wot that well; but Christ never used it in baptism. If ye will needs have it, use it as Christ did.” Harps.—“Admit your child die unchristened, what a heavy case you stand in!” Hawkes.—“If it do, what then?” Harps.—“Marry, then are ye damned and your child both!” Hawkes.—“Judge you no further than ye may by the scriptures.” Harps.—“Do ye not know that your child is born in original sin?” Hawkes.—“Yes, that I do.” Harps.—“How is original sin washed away?” Hawkes.—“By faith and belief of Jesus Christ.” Harps.—“How can your child, being an infant, believe?” Hawkes.—“The deliverance from sin standeth in the faith of his parents.” Harps.—“How prove you that?” Hawkes.—“By St. Paul’s words, ‘The unbelieving man is sanctified by the believing woman, and the unbelieving woman by the believing man, or else were your children unclean.’” Bonner.—“Recant, recant! Do ye not know that Christ said, ‘Except ye be baptized ye cannot be saved?’” Hawkes.—“Doth christianity stand in outward ceremonies or no?” Bonner.—“Partly it doth. What say you to that?” Hawkes.—“I say as St. Peter saith, ‘Not the washing of water purging the filthiness of the flesh, but a good conscience consenting unto God.’”¹ He was soon committed to the flames.

¹ Burn's Ecclesiastical Law.

Robert Smith, another dauntless English reformer, was asked by Bonner on his examination—"In what point do we dissent from the word of God?" Smith.—"First in hallowing your water, in conjuring of the same, in baptizing children, with anointing and spitting in their mouths, mingled with salt, and many other lewd ceremonies, of which not one point is able to be proved in God's order." Bonner.—"By the mass, this is the most unshamefaced heretic that ever I heard!" Mordant.—"I pray you, my lord, mark well his answer for baptism; he disalloweth therein holy ointment, salt, and such other laudable ceremonies, which no Christian man will deny." Smith.—"It is a shameful blasphemy against Christ, so to use any mingle-mangle in baptizing young infants." Bonner.—"I believe, I tell thee, that if they die before they be baptized they be damned." Smith.—"Ye shall never be saved by that belief; but I pray you, my lord, show me, are we saved by water or by Christ?" Bonner.—"By both." Smith.—"Then the water died for our sins, and so must ye say that the water hath life. It being our servant, and created for us, is our Saviour. Is not this a good doctrine?" Bonner.—"Then thou makest the water of none effect, and then put away water." Smith.—"Your generation have set at nought the word of God; for to judge children condemned that be not baptized is wicked."

Thomas Iveson of Surrey, who in the same year, 1555, was brought to the stake at Chichester, professed in his answer on baptism that it is a token and sign of Christ, as circumcision was, and none otherwise; and that he believed his sins were not washed away thereby, but his body only washed; for that his sins were washed away only by Christ's blood.²

John Bradford, in one of the many long and minute conversations which he had with his examiners on points of faith, declared that he durst not exclude from Christ all who died without baptism.³

Bellarmino, in his work on baptism says, that in scripture there is neither command nor example for infant baptism, which he refers to the imaginary catalogue of apostolical traditions.

We next come to the seventeenth century, when various religious questions were much discussed. Hitherto it had been

¹ Fox, *Acts and Mon.* vol. iii. p. 214.

² *Ibid.* p. 320.

³ *Ibid.*

the general practice in England to perform the baptism of infants by immersion, either once or thrice : in the latter cases they were declared to be “in the name of the three persons of the Trinity” successively. But several of the English protestant ministers, having taken refuge in Germany and Switzerland in the reign of Queen Mary, and observing that baptism was there administered by sprinkling, under the authority of Calvin and other reformers, brought back that mode with them on their return home. Thus the dipping of infants in the font, which had been complained of on account of their frequent delicacy and the coldness of the climate, was very much banished from this country about the year 1600.¹ The Baptists in England, as well as the Menonites and others on the continent of Europe, have always confined the ceremony to adults, and administered it by immersion.

Hugo Grotius says it is evident that infant baptism was not common in the early church, because Constantine the Great, though the son of Helena a zealous Christian, was not baptized till he was aged, like many others of that period.

Joseph Mede, in his commentary on Titus, maintained that “no such thing as sprinkling was used in baptism in the apostles’ days, nor for many ages after, and that to sprinkle young or old and call it baptism was very incongruous.”

John Saltmarsh, an eminent minister of Kent, published a discourse against water baptism. He declared that “no outward ordinance nor ministration of the creature can convey or confer pure spiritual things. Also that the baptism of water is not Christ’s baptism or of his administration, but John’s and his ministry ; and therefore that Christ never gave it to his disciples in their first commission to preach to the Jews, nor baptized he any himself, nor doth it appear that in Matthew xxviii. he meant baptism by water, but by the Spirit.”²

William Dell, an enlightened minister of Caius College, Cambridge, wrote a treatise “on the doctrine of baptisms,” in which he demonstrates at some length that water baptism is not an ordinance of the gospel. “The baptism of Christ,” says he, “is spirit or fire baptism ; and this is the one and only baptism of the New Testament. Its outward instrument is not material water, but the word ; as Christ shows where he says ‘Teach

¹ Encyclopædia Britannica.

² Sparkles of Glory.

baptizing,' showing that teaching the Word is the outward means of baptizing with the Spirit, which is sufficient for all the faithful. He that is truly washed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, what need hath he of cold material water to be poured on his body, under the pretence of any sign whatever, when he hath the truth, substance and heavenly thing itself?"¹ The sentiments of William Dell against the use of water were very decided.

Henry Hammond, chaplain to King Charles I., says in his "Annotations on the New Testament," "Is not Christ the end of ceremonies, types, figures and shadows? John's water baptism and all the shadows of Moses were to endure but for a time; for as all the prophets were unto John, so John was until Christ; and Christ by his internal washing—the laver of regeneration—fulfilled and ended, not only Moses' laver, but John's Jordan washing also, by fulfilling inwardly that which they represented outwardly."

The sentiments of Jeremy Taylor, afterwards an Irish bishop, are deserving of particular notice. In his treatise on "the Liberty of Prophecy," he clearly set forth the case of the anabaptists, apparently uniting in their arguments against infant baptism. This giving offence to some of his friends, he afterwards wrote a tract containing views directly opposite. The following are from the first piece in favour of the anabaptists:—

"Christ blessed children and so dismissed them, but baptized them not; therefore infants are not to be baptized. He hath other ways of bringing them to heaven than by baptism.—As we are sure that God hath not commanded infants to be baptized, so we are sure that God will do them no injustice, nor condemn them for what they cannot help. In the passage 'Except a man be born of water and of the spirit,' &c., the words water and the spirit signify the same thing; and by water is meant the effect of the Spirit purifying the soul, as appears in its parallel place of Christ baptizing with the spirit and with fire. It no more inferred a necessity of infant baptism than the other words of Christ, 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood,' &c., oblige us to give them the holy communion. Therefore, if men will do us justice, either let them give both sacraments to infants, as some ages of

¹ Doctrine of Baptisms.

the church did, or neither.—No sensible account can be given of the custom of godfathers.—The baptizing of infants produces inconveniences, which in other questions we avoid like rocks. Either baptism produces spiritual effects, or it does not. If not, why is such contention about it? what are we the nearer to heaven if we are baptized? And if it is neglected, what are we farther off? If it does operate upon the soul, producing spiritual benefits, these are produced by the external work alone, or by that as it is helped by the co-operation of the suscipient. If by the external work alone, how does this differ from the *opus operatum* of the papists? If not by the external work alone, but according to the predisposition of the suscipient, then, because infants have none, it does them no benefit at all. In short, either baptism is a mere ceremony or it implies a duty. If a ceremony only, how does it sanctify us? If a duty, how can children receive it, who cannot perform a duty at all?" This reasoning is clear and conclusive!

"Infant or paedo-baptism," he asserts, "is not commanded in scripture, nor was its necessity determined in the church, till the eighth age after Christ. In the year 418, in the Milevitan Council a provincial of Africa, a canon was made for it; but never till then. It was practised in Africa before that time, but not often there, nor at all in other places, as Ludovicus Vives says. In his annotations upon St. Austin, he asserts that anciently none but adults were baptized; and that St. Austin was the first that ever preached it to be absolutely necessary. It was the opinion of the primitive church that infants ought not to be baptized, as is clear from the sixth canon of the Council of Neocæsarea."¹

On this question, Barlow, Bishop of Lincoln, writes as follows:—"There is neither precept nor example for paedobaptism, nor any just evidence of it, for about two hundred years after Christ. Tertullian condemns it as an unwarrantable custom; and Nazianzen, a good while after him, dislikes it too. In the primitive times they were Catechumeni, then Illuminati or Baptizati. The truth is, that paedobaptism, how or by whom I know not, came into the world in the second century; and in the third and fourth began to be practised, though not generally, and defended as lawful from the mistaken text, John iii. 5. On

¹ Taylor's Liberty of Prophecy.

the same gross mistake of John vi. 53, they did for many centuries, both in the Greek and Latin churches, give the Lord's supper to infants; and I confess they might do both, as well as either." Willet, in his synopsis of popery, remarks that "baptism in the early age being deferred till Easter, it often happened that many died without baptism; which showed that the church had then no opinion of its necessity."

Bossuet, the learned Bishop of Meaux, in writing of communion under both kinds, says, "Protestants assert that the baptism of infants is founded on the scripture, but they produce no express passage to that purpose; arguing from remote, not to say doubtful, and even false consequences. It is certain that all the proofs brought from the scripture on this subject have no force at all."

Great disputes arose among the New England ministers in 1662, respecting the children who had a right to baptism; some confining it to those whose parents or grand-parents were members of the church, and others disapproving of this restriction, and conferring it on any whose parents expressed a desire on behalf of their children.¹

In this century, George Fox, Robert Barclay, George Whitehead, and the other early Friends showed clearly the spiritual nature of the Christian religion, and its freedom from the yoke of ritual observances,—a very valuable and important testimony, which their successors are bound to uphold.

Early in the eighteenth century, Henry Dodwell, a minister of the established church, promulgated the sentiment held by many at the present time, "that no one could partake of salvation, but those who had a federal right to it by the sacraments, and that these were the seals of the covenant; so that he left all who died without them to the uncovenanted mercies of God; adding that none had a right to give the sacraments but the apostles, and the bishops and priests ordained by them and their successors. It followed from hence, that sacraments administered by others not episcopally ordained were of no value, and that the dissenters were no Christians, but in a state of damnation till rebaptized."² Is not this even now the high church doctrine, though not often so fully expressed?

Dr. Trapp of Oxford remarks, "With water the pollution of

¹ Neal's Hist. of the Puritans.

² Burnet's Own Times.

the flesh is put away, but by Christ's baptism with the Spirit, the answer of a good conscience is known, purged from dead works to Godward." Bishop Burnet, in his conclusion to the History of his Own Times, complained freely of several of the regulations in the established church, and especially of "the exclusion of parents from being sponsors in baptism, and the requiring of others;" which he thought rendered it "a mockery rather than a solemn sponson in too many;" yet incapable of being redressed except by parliament.

Dr. Mitchell of Derby, in a sermon on the design of the gospel, showed that "christianity did not attempt to substitute one rite in the room of others which had been abrogated, but to bring men back to a strict regard of natural and moral duties."

George Whitfield thus remonstrated with some, "If you place religion merely in being baptized, in having the outward washing of water, without receiving the baptism of the Holy Ghost, you place the kingdom of God in something in which it does not consist; in effect, you place it in meat and drink."¹

About the middle of the eighteenth century, a numerous sect sprang up in Russia, named Duhobortzi or Malakans, who not only threw aside the other rites of the Greek church, but rejected also water baptism and the supper, affirming that the only baptism for the remission of sins takes place, when a man truly repents, and cries in sincerity to God.²

The nineteenth century has produced many comments worthy of notice on this subject. "The question of infant baptism," says the historian Milner, "has produced volumes of strife. I could wish that Christian people had never been vexed with a controversy so frivolous."³

Melville Horne, an episcopal minister, in a treatise on regeneration and baptism, entitled "Scripture and Common Sense," remarks:—"Purifying water has no tact with the mind, nor can, as a conductor, convey to it the grace of the Spirit. Every sign is in nature essentially different from the thing signified, though brutes and children often mistake shadows for bodies."

Neander the church historian observes, "It was by confounding regeneration with (water) baptism, and thus looking upon regeneration as a sort of charm completed at a stroke, by

¹ Whitfield's Sermon on the Kingdom of God.

² Pinkerton's Greek Church; W. Allen's Journal.

³ Milner's History, cent. 3rd.

supposing a certain magical purification and removal of all sin in the act of baptism, that men were led to refer the forgiveness of sins obtained through Christ, only to those particular sins which had been committed before baptism; instead of regarding all this as something, which, with the appropriation of it by faith, must go on developing itself through the whole of life.”¹

Dr. Halley, who published seven “lectures on the sacraments” in 1844, complains repeatedly that he finds the subject fraught with long and wearisome controversies, and perplexed with difficulties; so that cause is afforded to such as deny the perpetuity of those rites, to entertain serious objections to the views of the several parties, seeing that they cannot agree among themselves, on the meaning of the commission and authority, which they say they have received for these observances. Each party deprecates, refutes and severely denounces the views of the others.² There seems indeed no refuge from such difficulties, but in taking a spiritual view of the baptism required. Although he contends for baptism with water, yet he admits that there is a baptism of the Holy Ghost without water, a cleansing of the soul by his purifying influences, an administration of the Spirit by Jesus the Saviour upon all his people, by an internal and life-giving process.³—“Let it be observed,” he says, “that there is in the New Testament no express command to any living man or woman to be baptized, and no other command than that which is implied in Christ’s address to his apostles, to administer baptism to any person whatsoever. Were that one text obliterated from scripture, we should have no direct authority for the administration of baptism.”⁴ The question naturally suggests itself, Does not this one text admit of a very easy and warrantable interpretation of a spiritual kind? “The washing away of sin,” he admits, “is a solemn reality, and no ceremonial representation; to be performed by the Holy Spirit, and not by man himself.”

“It has been ingeniously and plausibly endeavoured,” says a late writer, “to make baptism a sign of admission into the visible church; but absurdly enough; for we know that half the baptized people in the world are very visible rogues, and it is flat blasphemy to call these visible Christians.”⁵

“To bring man directly to God just as he is,” remarks

¹ Neander’s History vol. i.

² Lectures, 1, 3, &c.

⁴ Lecture 4.

⁴ Lecture 7

⁵ Notes on construction of sheepfolds.

Dr. Cumming, “is the grand characteristic of true religion. To keep man from God, and detain him with the priest—the sacraments—the ceremony—is the grand effort of all false religions. There is no regenerative virtue inherent in or inseparable from baptism; for baptism is not the Holy Spirit. There is no saving and expiatory virtue in the Lord’s supper; for the Lord’s supper is not the Lord Jesus Christ. We may not place baptism in the room of the Holy Spirit, nor the eucharist in the place of the Lord Jesus. We must look far above and beyond them both!”¹

D’Aubigné remarks, that “to institute a mediatorial caste between man and God, and to cause men to purchase with works, with penances, and for a value in money, the salvation which God bestows,—is popery. To open to all through Jesus Christ, without human mediation, without that power called the church, a free access to the free gift of everlasting life bestowed by God on man,—such is christianity and the reformation. Popery interposes the church, or rather its ministers, between God and man; christianity and the reformation bring God and man together face to face.”²

Not only the Roman catholic churches, but also many of the professedly reformed, still persevere in notions and usages with respect to this rite, which arose in the darker ages. The Anglican church forbids any minister to practise exorcism, without the licence of the bishop.³

The Society of Friends, for about 200 years, taking a spiritual view of our Lord’s dispensation, and consequently of his declarations and practice on the subject of baptism, have altogether refrained from the use of the outward ceremony, believing the baptism of the Holy Spirit alone to be required and sufficient. Many of their writings at large may be referred to, by the inquirer for further reasons in support of such views.

In the Greek church, holy water is deemed of great efficacy; the rite of baptism very quickly follows the birth, and is performed by the priest with strange and almost ludicrous ceremonies. It is also bestowed freely and superstitiously on houses, furniture, and other inanimate things.⁴

Henry Martyn, in one of his conversations with a Jewish Mahometan, having, according to his frequent practice, urged the

¹ Sermon before the Queen, 1850.

² Hist. Reformation, vol. i.

³ Seventy-second Canon.

⁴ Kohl’s Russia.

observance of water baptism and the Lord's supper, as institutions of Christ, the Mahometan made this intelligent answer, "These are mere emblems, and if a man have the reality, what need is there of emblems?" How many reflecting heathens stumble at christianity, when the essential nature of these observances is insisted on as an essential part of it.¹

Herschell inquires "What did Peter tell Cornelius? That there was an apostolic church, in connection with which there was safety, and out of which there was no hope of anything but 'uncovenanted mercies?' That in the mysterious rite of water baptism, he should be made a member of this church? Alas poor Peter! he said not one word of all this; he preached faith in Christ; and as if to show that the outward rite is but the sign, not the instrument of the Spirit's gift, 'while he yet spake, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.' Here was the true Epiphany, the manifestation to the Gentiles."²

While very many Christians profess to believe that baptism or sprinkling with water was enjoined by our Lord, and is productive of spiritual blessings of the greatest value; such will do well to apply the simple test which he recommended; "By their fruits ye shall know them," and to consider whether those who have received the rite give evidence in their lives of any high benefits derived through it; or whether, on the contrary, it has been totally unproductive of spiritual grace, leaving them in the same position as those who have never received it. If the latter

¹ The great stress, which is laid by many missionaries on the reception of outward rites, is much to be lamented, as creating serious difficulties in the way of the heathen. The following incident is related of Radbod, king of Friesland, in the eighth century. "He declared himself ready to receive baptism, but first wished an answer to one question, viz., if on arriving in heaven, he should find there the former kings, his forefathers?" Bishop Wulfrum replied, "That these *having died without baptism*, had assuredly been condemned to hell." "What business then have I," said Radbod, "with a few poor people in heaven? I prefer to abide by the religion of my forefathers." This circumstance may serve to show how the spread of christianity was checked by the narrow and confused view of its doctrines, growing out of the ordinances of the church." Neander's Hist, 3rd period, 1 sect. May it not be asserted that such views are calculated to shock the common sense of inquiring heathens? Some of these have also been assured that the "sacraments are of no avail if administered by dissenting or by coloured ministers." But "The cloven foot" seeks in vain to hide itself.

² Herschell's Fatherland.

must be admitted, then another reflection forcibly arises, whether the nature of our Lord's injunction has not been mistaken, by giving it an outward interpretation, when he designed it to be understood in a spiritual sense. These deeply important questions are submitted to the serious and unprejudiced consideration of the reader.

On the Sign of the Cross.

Irenæus asserts that Valentinus, whom he calls a heretic, and who lived about 145, was the first that made any great account of the sign of the cross.¹ This sign was supposed, in the third century, to convey a miraculous power against calamities and malignant spirits; and no Christian is said to have undertaken an affair of moment without arming himself with it.² The efficacy of faith in Christ crucified was transferred to the outward sign, and a supernatural, sanctifying, protecting virtue was attributed to it.

Bishop Taylor says, "This is a ceremony, not of Divine ordinance or apostolical practice, but instituted by men; as Boethius observed in the fifth century."³ Willet remarks, "Having no warrant in the word, it is a tradition of men, and not after Christ."⁴ "The two lines, drawn across one another on a child's forehead," says Cartwright, "are a fontoy (phantasy), and an idle device of man's brains."⁵ The sign of the cross was employed at least four or five times in the ceremony of baptism. It was used also in the consecration of the eucharist, in the unction of confirmation, and in the ordination of presbyters; without it none of these rites were esteemed to be duly and solemnly performed.⁶ Some of the early reformers called it "the mark of the beast." Bishop Andrews, disputing with Cardinal Peronne about ceremonies, urged that man ought not to add to God's word, lest he lose his part in the book of life; when the cardinal asked, "Why then do you retain the cross in baptism?" The bishop answered, "Because authority enjoins it." "For the same reason," replied the cardinal, "we retain all the other ceremonies."⁷ Walter Brute, whose sentiments have already been quoted, expresses himself thus:—"The Bishop of Rome sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself as God.—

¹ Book i. c. 1. ² Neander's Hist., vol. i. 293. ³ Ductor dubitant.

⁴ Willet's Synopsis. ⁵ Reply to Whitgift. ⁶ Bingham's Christ. Antiq.

⁷ Sober Inquirer.

He giveth ‘to small and great, marks in their right hands and on their foreheads ; that no man should buy or sell but those that have the marks.’—The pope saith, that in the administration of every sacrament, he doth imprint—on the soul of him that receiveth it a certain character or mark, that cannot be wiped out. In giving of orders, the chief bishop doth imprint the corporal marks, but of the spiritual marks I know none. But this one thing is certain, that none in the church ought to sell spiritual merchandise, unless he have the mark of the beast. My counsel is, let the buyer beware of those marks, lest he drink of the wine of God’s wrath.”¹

In the oriental churches the crossings and bowings are almost endless ; three fingers are used in the former, as mystic symbols of the trinity; and this mode of crossing is deemed essential. Among the English these acts were carried to strange extremes before the reformation, and were supposed to convey sanctity and security. Even now there is a tendency in certain quarters to revive them. The British episcopal church requires the sign of the cross on the forehead of every infant when sprinkled; the French reformed church does not use it ; and the American episcopalians allow it to be omitted, when the relatives object. In all other ceremonies the Anglican church has discontinued this sign, though generally retained in them by the Romanists.

On the Baptism with the Holy Spirit.

“The spiritual baptism is that wherewith Christ daily baptizeth all who willingly receive him.” Chrysostom observes, “That which regenerates and renewes the hearts of the elect.”—*Piscator*. “That which washeth the soul as water doth the body.”—*Calvin*. “That which purgeth our consciences.”—*Peters*. “That which kindles zeal in our hearts.”—*Phillips*. “That which is necessary to salvation.”—*Fulk*. “That which purges our lusts and corruptions.”—*Pool*. “That which consumes the dross.”—*Henry*. “Makes partakers of the adoption of the sons of God.”—*Stevens*. “The only necessary baptism.”—*Brute*. “Wherewith Christ baptizeth all that come to him.”—*Taylor*. “That which we are directed to pray for.”—*Common Prayer Book*. “That which only saves.”—*Burkitt*. “Without it there is neither right nor title to the kingdom of God.”—*Clarke*.

¹ Fox’s *Acts and Mon.*, vol. i. ; Rev. xiii. 16, 17.

General Remarks.

A great difference of opinion and practice, in relation to the mode, subjects and effects of water baptism, has been shown to have prevailed among Christians from an early period. The *mode* at first appears to have been immersion, and the *subjects* were adults; the baptists, mennonists, and some anabaptists in modern times, still baptize thus. But the general usage among both protestants and catholics is at present that of sprinkling, and of applying it only to children. This variety in the mode of administration extends also to their methods of baptizing adult heathen converts.

In reference to the *effects* of water baptism, the diversity of sentiment has been equally wide, and the contention warm and repeated; some considering that it actually conveys grace, is equivalent to regeneration, and essential to eternal life; while others esteem it only as a sign or figure, but yet one that ought to be observed. Although in some churches the ceremony, under some mode or other, is enforced as necessary for those who desire to be regarded as strict members; yet, general practice if not direct avowal attests, that its importance has lost ground in the estimate of the Christian world. The spiritual regeneration attributed to it by some high professors, has probably contributed to this result.

If a conclusion be drawn from the usually thoughtless manner of resorting to the sprinkling of an infant, and from the festivities attendant, which seem to occupy the chief attention in many protestant families; it must be inferred that but little religious weight or importance is really attached to the ceremony. In England, compliance with it in all its questionable forms used to be required, in order to have the birth of a child publicly registered: but of late, a system of civil registration having been established, the practice of having infants sprinkled, or, as it is otherwise termed, "christened," appears to have been gradually declining, especially among the humbler classes.

The subject of water baptism did not attract so much attention and controversy at the time of the reformation, as that of the eucharist, nor were the variations of opinion upon it considered equally important. For this difference, several reasons may be assigned. The rite of baptism was received but once in the life of an individual; the other was by many received

monthly or oftener. The partakers of the one were chiefly children; those of the other were persons of mature age. The one was administered privately, or with but few spectators; the other with great publicity, splendour and solemnity.¹

Summary of Differences in Sentiment and Practice with respect to Baptism.

1. Some baptize by actual immersion; others by only pouring or sprinkling water: some by one, others by three immersions.
2. Most sprinkle only children; others restrict the rite to adults.
3. Some have baptized the dead; some have baptized others, as substitutes for the dead.
4. Some have baptized or sprinkled bells and other articles, giving to the former what are termed Christian names, and in certain churches the practice is still continued.
5. Some have baptized repeatedly; most baptize or sprinkle only once.
6. Some considered that those baptized among heretics ought to be re-baptized; others denied the necessity of this.
7. Some churches baptized only two or three times in a year, in large numbers; others baptize individuals alone, as often as occasion requires.
8. Some have professed to baptize with fire, by using a hot or fiery iron.
9. Some trace the sign of the cross on the forehead; others omit this sign, and deem it superstitious.
10. Some profess to prepare holy water for baptism; others believe that they possess no such power.
11. Some hold that no one, unless ordained by a bishop, has a right to baptize, yet allow a lay person, and even a nurse, to perform it in extreme cases; others consider that any sincere Christian may do so.
12. Some require the parents alone to answer and undertake for the infant; some believe that other "godfathers and godmothers" are the proper sureties; and others again that no sureties are necessary.
13. Some have maintained that between all these parties close spiritual consanguinity was contracted, and therefore they forbade either the "god-parents,"

¹ The Lavanda, or ceremony of washing the disciples' feet, is still observed by the Pope once a-year. It is a mere show or state-ceremonial, and a great outrage on sacred things. No one is allowed to attend but the élite of Catholic Europe in court or evening dresses. At this splendid piece of pageantry, the pontiff uses a golden ewer and basin, every thing is well prepared and highly adorned, perfumes and nosegays of flowers are in profusion, and the whole forms a revolting contrast to a work of humiliation and charity.—*Roper's Romanism in Rome.*

the child or the priest to intermarry ; others rejected altogether this notion. 14. Some apply the water only to those adults, whom they deem to be true believers ; others to these and their families ; and others to all who apply with seriousness, for themselves or for children connected with them. 15. Some say that the ceremony is to be used only as a figure of the new birth, and is profitable only, but not essential ; others affirm that it is the commencement of the spiritual life, equivalent to regeneration and essential to salvation, the souls of all being lost who die without it. 16. Some dispense with the outward rite altogether as unnecessary, believing that it is the filth of the soul, and not of the flesh, that must be washed away ; and that the blood of Christ graciously applied to the heart, through faith in him, can alone effect this one spiritual baptism and remission of sins.

12th Section.—*Of the Lord's Supper, Eucharist or Mass.*

The religious observance now to be considered has been for ages, as to its nature, effects, and mode of celebration, the cause of more bitter controversy between Roman Catholics and Protestants, and of more blood being shed, than any other matter of difference.

For the long period of nearly 200 years, from the time of Henry IV, about 1400, to the reign of James I., it was made the principal test of religious faith, both in England and on the continent of Europe ; and the Roman Catholics more especially, but not exclusively, when they possessed the chief secular power, condemned and burnt as heretics, without distinction of age or sex, those who differed from their own views upon it. The grand question was, not whether the rite ought to be retained or not, for in the former opinion most coincided, but as to "*the real presence;*" that is, whether the words pronounced by the priest, "This is my body," are to be taken literally or figuratively ; and whether they did or did not convert the bread into the real body of Christ. To probe the sentiments of the accused, the most minute distinctions and the most subtle interrogatories were framed ; which often tended to confound both parties, and to involve them in wide contradictions and fearful absurdities. Yet on the issue depended life or death to hundreds if not thousands !

In consequence of a difference of opinion on this mysterious

question, many of the most eminent Christians of Europe were consigned to the stake—a dreadful result, which could not have been accomplished without that unscriptural union or alliance of the secular and ecclesiastical power, the evils of which are the special subject of this treatise. It forms, therefore, a legitimate part of the author's duty, to show, not only the forms and ceremonies which state-authority was employed to uphold and enforce, but also the conscientious reasons against such observances, or the doubts respecting them, urged by reflecting, serious persons.

Some of the remarks on the use of the bread and wine, having been coupled with others on baptism and already quoted, will not require to be repeated. The reader must fully understand, that most of the individuals, whose language is about to be quoted, were still of opinion, that at least as a commemorative act, the ceremony was one of divine appointment; yet because many of them conscientiously differed as to its form, nature or effects, they were condemned to the flames, without mercy, as heretics.

At the feast of the passover, it was customary among the Jews, for the master of the house to take unleavened bread, then giving thanks to God, to break it and give to the family; likewise to take the cup, give thanks, and distribute it to the household. This our Lord fulfilled according to the law; but at the last passover supper, he also drew their attention from the paschal lamb and the deliverance of their forefathers, the objects originally commemorated by the passover, to the breaking of his own body, and to the deliverance of man from sin, being the great purposes typified by both. He therefore directed that “as often as” they who were Jews observed the rite in future, they should do it “in remembrance”¹ of him; who was “the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.”²

The practice of breaking bread and drinking wine together as a religious ceremony, with special reference to the breaking of the body and shedding of the blood of Christ, and to a communion in the benefits derived thereby, prevailed extensively in the early periods of christianity; and was observed in various modes according to the views of different churches.

¹ Luke xxii. 19.

² John i. 29.

And here the author may be permitted further to remark, that in tracing the many awfully superstitious observances connected with this ceremony, he desires to treat the various views of his fellow-believers with respect. He is also bound to acknowledge his reverent sense of the inestimable benefits, which mankind have received by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; by his death as a sacrifice for the sins of the world; and by the gift of the Holy Spirit purchased thereby. Would that the mists of superstition and ignorance were dispelled, which have obscured these great doctrines, that the glorious light of gospel truth may be more clearly seen; and that the tenfold husks which have enveloped the living kernel were removed, that the value of the inward substance may be more fully accepted, appreciated and enjoyed.

The earliest Christian writers and apologists scarcely allude to this rite. Justin Martyr, about A.D. 146, affords the first information on it after the time of the Apostles: and when he wrote it was celebrated with much simplicity.¹ Irenæus contended, about the year 200, that the eucharist should be regarded as "a sacrifice;" thus opening a floodgate, through which the church was deluged with error.² The Ascœdrutæ in the second century are mentioned as "heretics" who did not use "the sacraments."³

Tertullian soon after speaks of the celebration of the eucharist, in connection with the meals of the early Christians; as we read in the New Testament, of "the breaking of bread," in private houses and public assemblies, with remembrance of the breaking of the body of Christ. Tertullian is said to have been the first who applied the word "sacrament" to religious rites. "This word," says Curcelloëus, "which by human prudence has been applied to the sacred rites of baptism and the Lord's supper, is very improper; for it signifies chiefly a military oath. But though there were no impropriety in the word, yet, having been the occasion of so many quarrels and contentions among Christians, it ought now to be rejected."⁴

Public prayers were followed by oblations of bread, wine and other things, every one offering according to his ability; and partly from hence all those who were in necessity derived their

¹ Smith's Relig. of Ancient Britain.

² Ibid.

³ Bingham's Christ. Antiq. xv. 2—9.

⁴ See his first Dissert.

subsistence. Of the bread and wine thus presented to the church, such a quantity was separated from the rest as was required in the administration of the Lord's supper, being "consecrated by the prayers of the bishop." The wine in many churches was mixed with water, and the bread was divided into several portions; some being carried to the sick or absent members of the church, as a token of love and fellowship. The ministers likewise received from individuals meal or flour, with which a large loaf was made, called "*panis dominicus*," for use in "the communion," and for distribution to the people.¹ Participation in the ceremony was even then considered by many to be essential to salvation.

The manner of celebrating the eucharist among the ancient Christians in some places, is thus described:—"After the customary oblations had been made, the deacon brought water to the bishops and presbyters standing round the table, to wash their hands; according to the language of the Psalmist, "I will wash my hands in innocency, and so will I compass thy altar, Oh Lord." Then the deacon cried out, "Embrace and kiss each other;" which being done, the whole congregation prayed for the peace and welfare of the church, for the tranquillity and repose of the world, for wholesome weather, and for all ranks and degrees of men. After this followed mutual salutations of the ministers and people; and then the bishop or presbyter, having sanctified the elements by a solemn benediction, broke the bread and gave it to the deacon, who delivered it to the communicants, and next handed them the cup. During the time of administration, they sang hymns and psalms; and having concluded with prayer and thanksgiving, the people saluted each other with a kiss of peace, and the assembly broke up."² In consequence of abuses which crept in, the parting kiss was discontinued after a time. It has been followed in many churches by the use of an unexceptionable salutation—the giving of the right hand of fellowship.

In the third century, it became customary for the minister at the commencement of the ceremony to admonish the church to silent devotion, calling upon them to lift up their souls to heaven, to which they usually replied, "Yea, to the Lord we have lifted

¹ Mosheim first century, 4—6, and second century, 4—12.

² Encyc. Brit.; Neander's Hist., vol. i. 325.

them up.”¹—Cyprian says, “The eating of Christ is our abiding in him: and our drinking is, as it were, a certain incorporation in him. The eating of his flesh therefore is a sincere desire to abide in him. None eateth of this Lamb, but such as be true Israelites,—that is true Christian men, without colour or dissimulation. He is the food of the mind, not of the stomach.” How often has this feeding on Christ by living faith been lost sight of and superseded by an empty ceremony!

“As the churches of North Africa were the first to bring prominently into notice the necessity of infant baptism, so in connection with it they introduced the communion of infants; for as they neglected to distinguish with sufficient clearness between the sign and the divine thing which it signified, and as they understood all that is said in the sixth chapter of John’s gospel, concerning eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ, to refer to the outward participation of the Lord’s supper, they concluded that this, from the earliest age, was absolutely necessary to the attainment of salvation.”² Origen observed “Of the outward supper, the worthy and the unworthy may partake alike; but not of the true heavenly bread, since otherwise it could not have been said that whoever eats of this bread shall live for ever.” “Nothing which enters into the mouth sanctifies the man, though by the simple the so-called bread of the Lord is supposed to possess a sanctifying power.”³ He seems however to have been the first, that recommended “a very reverential regard for the elements after consecration.”⁴

The eucharist was generally received once a-week or oftener, in the second and third centuries, by the diligent and zealous.⁵ A spiritually-minded sect of ascetics named Massalians or Euchites, held in the fourth century that the sacrament of bread and wine did neither good nor harm, and rejected its use. They subsisted through several hundred years. Basil says, “There is an intellectual mouth of the inward man, at which he is fed who partakes of the Word of life, which is the bread that came down from heaven.”⁶ In the time of Constantine, the tables or altars, which had hitherto been made of wood, were built of stone, and often adorned with silver.⁷ Ambrose seemed to regard every celebration to be as great a mystery and miracle as the incarnation!

¹ Neander’s Hist., vol. i.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid. ⁴ Smith’s Religion of Britain.

⁵ Bingham’s Christ. Antiq.

⁶ Basil on Psalm xxxiii.

⁷ Ibid.

"Why," said Augustine, "dost thou prepare thy teeth and th stomach? Believe, and thou hast eaten. To believe on him is to eat the living bread. He eats who believes on him." — "The bread of our heart is that whereon he feeds, who eat inwardly, not outwardly; with the heart, not with the teeth."¹ The Donatists denied the validity of the sacraments, when they were consecrated and administered by sinful men. Augustine however maintained the contrary, "even though a murderer performed the services."² His strong views and expressions encouraged errors in this and other respects. He earnestly advocated the admission of children to the eucharist as well as to baptism, though they understood nothing of either ceremony, urging that both were necessary for their obtaining eternal life. This was the general opinion of the church for many ages. The practice of giving the bread and wine to children is said not to have been abrogated in France till the twelfth century; in Germany it was retained later; and in the eastern churches it is still continued.⁴

The idea being now generally received that this rite was a "sacrifice," altars were substituted for tables, and other sacrificial appendages followed. Priestcraft found in this idea a strong support, and grasped it with eagerness. The sign of the cross was introduced. Pomp and splendour were displayed, and rich vessels of gold and silver were deemed necessary articles. The word "mass" was not known in the primitive church; nor is it found in the works of Augustine, Chrysostom, or other writers of the fourth century. They termed the ceremony "the supper of the Lord," "the mystical supper or table," "the eucharist," "celebration of the sacrament," "the Lord's board," "oblation," "communion," "mystery," &c. Certain Christians called Aquarii used water at the eucharist instead of wine. The Ebionites did the same. Others used water mingled with the wine, which was said to denote the union of the church with Christ; and this was the general practice. Some substituted milk, honey or grapes for wine.⁵

At a council held in 506, the laity were ordered to communicate three times in a year, under penalty of not being reputed catholic Christians. A provincial council at Cæsar Augusta in 519, pronounced a curse upon those receiving the sacrament, who

¹ Tract. 25 and 26 on John vi.

² On Psalm xlvi.

³ Bingham's Christ. Antiq.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

ate it not in the church. The eucharist had already been administered to infants: it was now given even to dead persons. It formed a part of Divine worship, was used to consecrate every religious act, and was occasionally celebrated at the tombs of martyrs; whence followed masses for the dead. The bread and wine were held up to the view of the people before distribution, that they might be gazed on with reverence. The bread was usually broken, to signify the breaking of the body of Christ. At other times it was pierced with a spear, and said to be immolated. With the remains of the eucharist, and with other oblations, it had long been usual to hold occasionally "the agapae, or feasts of charity," being a liberal collation of the rich to feed the poor; but this practice giving rise to various abuses, was prohibited in the sixth and seventh centuries.¹

"The canon of the mass," instituted by Pope Gregory "the Great" about the year 620, for the celebration of the eucharist, occasioned a remarkable change, by the introduction of a lengthened, pompous and magnificent ritual. It was still generally performed in the language of each particular country, and the first time that it was openly said in Latin appears to have been at the Council of Constance, by the pope's legate in 681. The administration of the sacrament was now deemed the most solemn and important part of public devotion, and was everywhere embellished with a variety of senseless appendages. The burning of incense received general sanction. Charlemagne made some attempts to stem the torrent of superstition, but with little success. To the ceremonies of trying the guilt or innocence of individuals, by cold water, by single combat, by the fire ordeal, and by the cross, was added the celebration of the eucharist with other rites, to give to these barbarisms a religious and imposing aspect.² During the same period it was degraded and profaned, by being introduced occasionally into ridiculous and absurd festivals, instituted in imitation of the heathen, and

¹ Bingham's *Christian Antiquities*.

² "In the Life of Gregory the Great it is related that a certain woman, when he gave her the eucharist, with the usual words 'the body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul,' laughed at the form, and when asked the reason, she replied, because he called that the body of Christ, which she knew to be bread, that she had made with her own hands a little before."—*Bingham's Christian Antiquities*, xv. 2—5.

with no higher object than to promote sport and diversion at the cost of religion, and even of common decency.

A canon of one of the provincial councils enjoined that baptized infants should receive communion, before they partook of any nourishment. The priests also were required to administer it in the morning before they tasted other food. Great importance was attached to the kind of cup used in performing the ceremony. In connection with this, Boniface the martyr said, about 750, that formerly golden priests made use of wooden cups; but now, on the contrary, wooden priests used golden chalices. The Triburentian Council decreed, that no priest by any means presume to make the sacred mystery of the body and blood of our Lord in cups or chalices of wood.¹

The superstitious custom of performing solitary or secret masses by the priest alone, on behalf of souls said to be detained in purgatory, was introduced by degrees, and proved a rich source of emolument to the clergy. There was also the dry mass, without the bread and wine or the consecration; and the two-fold or three-fold mass, several being thrown into one service, and all being celebrated with one canon,—this was apparently a device of the priests to save labour. Voluntary oblations of money were sometimes made by those who received the sacraments; the priests were prohibited from encouraging this usage, but it became a common rule and was expected as such. In some countries it still prevails. The popish priests do not usually require payment for the sacraments: they do not sell, but they accept gifts, either for themselves, or for some miraculous image, or for the souls in purgatory, for which masses and other oblations are necessary.

The Paulicians of the eighth century, a large body of Christians in the east before referred to, maintained that the eating of the flesh and drinking of the blood of Christ consisted simply in coming into vital union with him, through his doctrines and his word, which they considered to be his true flesh and blood. They insisted not on bread and wine, but on his words, which were to be support for the soul, as bread and wine are for the body.²

For a very long period, the sacrament of the bread and wine was viewed and employed by the great body of catholics as a sort of charm or amulet, to heal bodily diseases in men or in

¹ Bingham's Christ. Antiq.

² Neander's Hist. vol. iii. p. 363.

cattle, to ensure success and avert calamities, as well as to minister health to the soul. Voyagers carried with them consecrated bread, as a pledge for their preservation. It was often administered with absolution to the sick or dying, and was then termed the *viaticum*, or *provision for their journey* into the next world. It was sometimes even buried with the corpse. These notions were warmly urged by the corrupt and selfish priests.¹

It had been common to pronounce the consecration of the eucharist audibly and intelligibly, that the people might hear, and answer Amen; but in the tenth century, the contrary practice of "intonation" or pronouncing the services in a low voice began to be introduced to render them more mysterious.

The oblations of common bread by the people for the purpose of the eucharist, having commenced at a very early period, were generally continued till the eleventh or twelfth century, when wafers and unleavened bread were introduced by the priests, under the plea of decency and respect, the people being ordered to bring a penny each, instead of the former contribution.² The eastern churches still used leavened bread, and great disputes followed. In the ancient church, the bread had usually been broken into many parts, that each one of the people might partake. Afterwards it was broken by the Greeks into four parts, by the Latins into three, and by some other churches into nine parts. The large wafer or thin small cake now used in the Romish churches, is still broken into three parts, to retain a shadow of the ancient custom; but the people generally do not partake.³ All who attended divine worship, were expected to share in the eucharist; but by degrees this was relaxed, and those who would not partake of it were allowed a sort of consecrated bread, called the "eulogia." This appears to have been introduced in the ninth century.⁴

At length arose in the eleventh century the famous controversy, respecting the manner in which the body of Christ was believed to be partaken of in the eucharist. Christian professors had long differed on this mysterious subject; but an opinion gained ground, that the figurative interpretation ought to be dismissed, and that after consecration the same identical body of Christ, that was born of the virgin, that suffered upon the cross, and

¹ Blunt's Reformation.

² Bingham's Christ. Antiq.

³ Ibid.

⁴ It is almost impossible to describe these and other matters, without using the corrupt ecclesiastical phraseology commonly employed.

that was raised from the dead, was in reality present. Others declared that none but saints and believers received the body of Christ in the sacrament; while a few others held that the bread and wine were merely signs and symbols of Christ's absent flesh and blood, which were partaken of by faith. This controversy, involving a religious and mysterious question of great moment, was carried on very fiercely for some ages between the different parties and their leaders.

Berenger, who died in 1088, took a more spiritual view of the Lord's supper than most of the ruling men of his day, though many others agreed with him. He held, contrary to the received opinion, that the passages in the 6th chapter of John had no reference whatever to the outward supper. "Christ," said he, "does not descend *from* heaven, but the hearts of the faithful ascend devotionally to him *in* heaven."—"The true, the imperishable body of Christ is eaten only by the true members of Christ, in a spiritual manner." It was a favourite maxim of his, "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him thus no more."¹

Absolution, or the remission of sins was generally understood to attend the worthy reception of "the sacraments," these being deemed "the keys" given to Peter and his successors. Till the twelfth century, the form of absolution was imperative or precative, not indicative and absolute.² Salvation was said to be impossible, without a participation in these "tremendous mysteries." Thus the one great offering was overlooked, and religion made a thing of rote, to be shared equally by the righteous and the wicked!

Peter de Bruis Abbot of Clugny, with Henry his disciple and their followers, held, not only with Berenger that there is no change of substance in the sacrament, but also that it is no longer to be administered. Peter was burnt "at St. Giles Languedoc." Many united with them in Flanders, France and Italy, among whom was Arnold of Brescia, who was also burnt for his reputed heresies.³ These were the usual stigma and end of such, as ventured to dissent from the gross ideas upheld by arbitrary authority in church and state.

It was not until the Council of Lateran in 1215, that the great question was decided, when Innocent III., that bold and unscrupulous pontiff, sanctioned the notion of "the real presence," and established the term "*transubstantiation*,"

¹ Neander's Hist. vol. iii.

² Bingham's Christ. Antiq.

³ Dupin.

asserting it in gross and positive terms, as the authorised doctrine of the Romish church. This doctrine teaches the duty of paying divine worship to Christ, under the form of the consecrated bread or host, (from *hostia*, a victim), and inculcates the idea of a propitiatory sacrifice; Christ being understood to be truly and properly offered up, on every occasion of mass being performed. Who should set bounds to the authority of men that declared they had power to produce, at their own bidding, the Deity himself? The same Council of Lateran reduced the obligation to receive the eucharist to once in the year, at Easter, when every man and every woman were enjoined to confess all their sins to the priest. This rule was afterwards made canon law. Private and solitary masses soon became general, and such continued the state of things till the reformation.

A new train of ceremonies and institutions followed the notion of transubstantiation, in honour of what was blasphemously called *the deified bread*. Hence arose the customs of kneeling, and adoring the sacrament or host, which was elevated for the purpose; and of carrying about this "divine bread" in solemn pomp through the public streets, and with lighted candles, though at noon. An annual festival of the holy sacrament, called "*Corpus Christi*," was instituted by Urban IV. in 1264, and gave "a finishing touch to the highest expression of superstition and absurdity."¹

The standing posture was anciently adopted at the reception of the bread and wine; sometimes however the communicants knelt: the original practice of receiving it when sitting, appears to have become limited almost to Poland.² In the French reformed church the communicants stand singly. "The Romish priests admit that they should be guilty of idolatry in kneeling before the elements, if they did not believe them to be the real body and blood of Christ. This ceremony [of kneeling] was not introduced into the church," say the puritans, "till Antichrist was at his full height, and there is no one action in the whole service that looks so much like idolatry."³ Among the practices of the anabaptists of Munster which offended their contemporaries, was their partaking of the Lord's supper much after the manner of an ordinary meal.

In consonance with the prevailing ideas, Archbishop Peckham

¹ Mosheim.

² Bingham's *Christ. Antiq.*

³ Neal's *Puritans*.

enjoined, "The sacrament of the eucharist shall be carried with due reverence to the sick, the priest having on at least a surplice and stole, with a light carried before him in a lantern with a bell; and the people by the minister's discretion, shall be taught to prostrate themselves, or at least to make humble adoration, wheresoever the King of Glory shall happen to be carried under the similitude of bread!"¹

A hermit disputing in Paul's Church about 1306, affirmed that the sacraments then used in the church were not instituted by Christ. John Fox supposes this to have been one Ranulphus, mentioned in the "Flower of History," who died in prison.²

In the "Ploughman's Complaint," before quoted, the writer expresses himself as follows:—"Ah, Lord Jesus! whether thou ordainest an order of priests, to offer on the altar thy flesh and thy blood, to bring man out of sin and pain, and whether thou gave them a power to eat thy flesh and thy blood; and whether none other man may do so, without leave of priest. Lord, we believe that thy flesh is very meat, and thy blood very drink; and whoso eateth thy flesh and drinketh thy blood, dwelleth in thee, and thou in him: and he that eateth this bread shall live without end. But, Lord, thy disciples said this is a hard word; but thou answeredst them, the Spirit it is that maketh you alive; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. Lord, blessed mayest thou be; for in this word thou teachest us, that he that keepeth thy words and doth them, eateth thy flesh, and drinketh thy blood, and hath everlasting life in thee."³

When the doctrine of the corporeal presence was first received in the western church, the whole loaf was believed to be changed, at each celebration, into the entire body of Jesus Christ; so that in the distribution of parts, one had an eye, another an ear, another a finger, &c. &c.; and this was supported by pretended miracles suited to that opinion. Such continued to be the doctrine of the Church of Rome for nearly three hundred years. But when the school-men began to sift and form the tenets of that church, they adopted a more refined and subtle way of explaining the mystery, and taught that there was an entire body in every crumb of bread, and in every drop of wine. Wycliffe and others showed the absurdity of these gross notions by

¹ Burn's Eccles. Law. ² Neander's Hist. vol. i.

³ Fox's Acts and Mon. vol. i.

cogent appeals to plain reason. Afterwards Christ's body was by some believed to be present in the manner of a spirit, which was only occasionally seen.¹ The more superstitious of the people fancied that they must "see their Maker," according to the common phrase, "before they could lie down in peace on their beds at night!" consistently with this coarse corporeal idea, they charged the protestants with giving the people the creature, instead of the Creator!² From that period, this doctrine, strengthened by the notion of the infallibility of the pope and the church, has continued to be generally held by the Romanists. Many enlightened men, however, testified against it from time to time, while infidelity denied it and christianity for its sake, and various sentiments contradictory of each other continued to be entertained by its supporters.

The priests freely acknowledged to Luther the impostures which they practised on the vulgar, in administering the eucharist, by introducing other words in the pretended consecration and mixing impious jests with the proceedings. So almost incredibly low and gross were the notions of even sincere, religious people, that Farel, one of the French reformers, confesses: "The wafer, which the priest held in his hands, placed in the box, and shut up there, being eaten and given to others to eat, was to me the true God, and there was no other, either in heaven or on the earth." Thus dreadfully had the religious world sunk before the Reformation,³ and thus blasphemous was the worship. The power which the priests claimed for themselves in the sacraments greatly fostered other errors. It was deemed a monstrous desecration of their holy character to enter into the connubial state, or to submit to the judgment of princes or people. But it might truly be said of many of them, as of the ancient

¹ Burnet's Hist.

² Soame's English Reformation.

³ "Hocus pocus" is said to be derived from the mocking of the common people at the words used in the catholic consecration of the sacramental elements, *Hoc est corpus*. This was a species of transmutation applied to the words.—*Laing's Notes of a Traveller*. Some of the priests confessed that, instead of the appointed form, they said in derision, "*Panis es, et panis manebis; vinum es, et vinum manebis.*" "Bread thou art and bread thou wilt remain; wine thou art and wine thou wilt remain."—*Reformation in Europe*." "The wary answer of the princess, afterward Queen Elizabeth, to her popish examiner is well known, and in substance thus, "Christ was the word and spake it, he took the bread and brake it, and what His word did make it, that I receive and take it."—*Hume, &c.*

heathens, that “professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, &c.”¹

The principal aim of the eminent John Wicliffe was, to call back the church from her idolatry, especially in the matter of the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ; as well as from her usurped power to punish spiritual offences with corporal pains. He declared that it is not found in the gospel or established by it, that Christ made or ordained mass.²

Philip Repington, in his public examination, declared that as touching the sacrament he would hold his peace, until such time as the Lord should otherwise illuminate the minds of the clergy.³ He was however afterwards prevailed on to adopt the Romish doctrines, and at length became a cardinal.⁴

Walter Brute of Hereford before quoted, who lived about 1405, had very clear and spiritual views on many points of Christian faith and practice. On the communion of the body and blood of Christ, he expressed himself as follows:—“I believe and know that Christ is the true bread of God, which descended from heaven, and giveth life to the world. Of which bread whosoever eateth shall live for ever, as is declared in the sixth chapter of John. By the faith which we have in Christ, as the true Son of God, who came down from heaven to redeem us, we are justified from sin, and so live by Him; which is the true bread and meat of the soul. And the bread which Christ gave is his flesh, given for the life of the world. As we believe that He is true God, so must we also believe that He is a true man, and then do we eat the bread of heaven, and the flesh of Christ. And if we believe that He did voluntarily shed his blood for our redemption, then do we drink his blood. Except we thus eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, we have not eternal life in us; because the flesh of Christ verily is meat, and his blood is drink indeed; and whosoever eateth his flesh and drinketh his blood, abideth in Christ and Christ in Him. But the priests be greatly deceived, and also greatly deceive others: for the people believe that they see the body of Christ, nay rather Christ himself, between the hands of the priests, for so is the common oath they swear; ‘By Him whom I saw this day between the priest’s hands.’ And they believe that they eat not the body of Christ, but at Easter, or when they lie

¹ Romans i. 22.

² Fox’s Acts and Mon. vol. i. 480.

³ Fox’s Acts and Mon. vol. i. 480.

⁴ Lives of British Reformers.

upon their death beds, and receive with their bodily mouths the sacrament of his body. But since the body of Christ is the soul's food, and not the food of the body in this world, whosoever believeth doth eat spiritually and really, at any time when he so believeth; and it is manifest that they do greatly err, which believe that they eat not the body of Christ, but when they eat with their teeth the sacrament of his body. The priests therefore are in great peril, most dangerously seducing themselves and the people."¹

William Thorp of Shrewsbury, being examined before Archbishop Arundel about the same time as to his faith, declared "I said to the people, 'the virtue of the most holy sacrament of the altar standeth much more in the belief thereof that you ought to have in your soul, than in the outward sight thereof. And therefore ye were better to stand still quietly to hear God's word, because through the hearing thereof men come to very true belief.' The Archbishop pleaded the use of images, not to be worshipped for themselves but to move the people to devotion. I replied, 'Sir, they that come to the church to pray devoutly to the Lord, may in their inward wits be the more fervent, that their outward wits be closed from all outward seeing and hearing, and from all disturbance and lettings.'" He requested the people that they would abstain from the sacraments of the corrupt Romish priests, saying, "No one needs to be afraid to die without taking any sacrament of those enemies of Christ; since Christ himself will not fail to minister all sacraments, lawful, healthful and necessary, at all times, and especially at the end, to all them that are in true faith, in stedfast hope and perfect charity." The archbishop and priests were very bitter against him; and he is supposed to have died in prison.²

It had been the ancient practice for the people (or laity) to partake of both the bread and the wine, which was termed "receiving the sacrament in both kinds;" but about 1100 was introduced a new custom, which in 1414 was solemnly enjoined by the Council of Constance, that the priests should restrict the wine to themselves, and distribute the bread or wafer alone to the people. This practice has proved another cause of great contention. It has subsisted ever since in the Roman

¹ FOX's Acts and Mon., vol. i. 564.

² Ibid.

catholic church, but is rejected both by protestants generally and by the oriental churches. The Bohemians were by some called Ultraquists, because they received both the bread and wine. The same council decreed, "If any one shall deny whole and entire Christ, the Fountain and Author of all graces, to be taken under one species of bread, &c., let him be anathema."

Ten persons, mostly of Tenterden in Kent, were compelled in 1511 to abjure the following, among other supposed errors:—"That the sacraments of baptism and confirmation are not necessary or profitable for men's souls; that holy water and holy bread are not better after benediction by the priest than before." Many others, adhering to their opinions, were burnt about the same time as obstinate heretics.¹

Elizabeth Stamford, being examined before the Bishop of London, confessed thus:—"Christ feedeth and fast nourisheth his church with his own precious body, that is, the bread of life coming down from heaven; this is the worthy word that is worthily received, and joined unto man to be in one body with him. Sooth it is, that they be both one, they may not be parted. This is the wisely deeming of the holy sacrament, Christ's own body; this is not received by chewing of teeth, but by hearing with ears, and understanding with your soul, and wisely working thereafter."²

At the Reformation in the sixteenth century, Luther, whose eyes were but very partially opened with respect to ceremonies, while he rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation, held the opinion not less incomprehensible, that the partakers of the Lord's supper received the real body and blood of Christ, along with the bread and wine. This idea was termed, in distinction, *consubstantiation*. Something like it is often held even now by the supporters of baptismal regeneration. Though Luther was the great instrument for carrying out the reformation from papal corruption and oppression; yet his views on this subject were much more outward and gross than those of many other reformers.

Occasionally however he expressed more spiritual views: "If divers men shall use a diverse rite, let not one judge or condemn another, but let every one abound in his own sense; and let us all savour and judge the same things, though in

¹ Fox's Acts and Mon. vol. i.

² Ibid.

forms we act diversely ; for outward rites, as we cannot want them either as meat and drink, so neither do they commend us to God, but only faith and love command us to him. And therefore let that of Paul take place here, that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. And so, no rite nor form is the kingdom of God, but faith within us." Again he says, "The better part of every sacrifice, and consequently of the Lord's supper, is in the word and the promises of God. Without faith in this word and in these promises, the sacrament is but dead. It is a body without a soul, a cup without wine, a purse without money, a type without fulfilment, a letter without meaning, a casket without jewels, a sheath without a sword." And further "The priests may deny us the sacrament, but they cannot deprive us of the strength and grace which God hath attached to it. It is not their will nor any power of theirs, but our own faith, that the Lord has made essential to our salvation. The sacrament, the altar, the priest, the church, we may pass them all by : that word of God, which the bull of the pope condemned, is more than all these things. The soul may dispense with the sacrament ; but it cannot live without the word. Christ the true bishop will himself supply your spiritual feast." By these and other remarks to the same effect, Luther at times gratified some, startled others, and offended many of those who heard him.'

Calvin believed that the bread and wine were not the actual flesh and blood of Christ, but that these were sacramentally received by the faithful, in the use of the outward elements. Zwingle and Oecolampadius took much more spiritual views of the subject than those generally maintained by Luther. They held that the flesh and blood were not really present ; but that the bread and wine were only external commemorative symbols, designed to excite, in the minds of the partakers, the remembrance of the sufferings and death of Christ, and of the benefits arising therefrom. Thus Oecolampadius, at a conference in 1527, says, "Christ, who said to the people of Capernaum, 'the flesh profiteth nothing,' rejected by those very words the oral manducation or chewing of his body ; therefore he did not establish it at the institution of his supper. There is danger in

¹ D'Aubigné's Reformation.

attributing too much to mere matter.—Since we have the spiritual eating, what need of the bodily one?"¹ Zwingle remarks to Luther, "Jesus says that to eat his flesh corporeally profiteth nothing; whence it would result that [if outwardly eaten] he had given us in the supper a thing that would be useless to us. The soul is fed with the Spirit, and not with the flesh. Christ's body is [according to you] a corporeal and not a spiritual nourishment. You are thus re-establishing popery."² Luther stoutly denied that he was a sacramentarian, as the reformers were often called. This controversy greatly divided the chief protestant leaders, and was repeatedly agitated with unsatisfactory and distressing results.

William Tyndal the martyr declared, that it were better to receive neither of the parts of the sacrament than one only, as practised in the Romish church. It was an opinion frequently expressed in strong terms by him and other reformers, that the ceremonies of the church had brought the world from God. "By works, superstitions and ceremonies," said they, "we decay from the faith, which alone doth truly justify and make holy."³

John Frith, one of the English martyrs, in Queen Mary's reign, said, "The ancient fathers before Christ never believed the gross and carnal eating of Christ's body; yet notwithstanding they did eat him spiritually, and were saved; as Adam, Abraham, Moses, &c., all of whom ate the body of Christ, and drank his blood, as we do. But this eating and drinking of theirs was spiritual, pertaining only to faith, and not to the teeth; for they "were all under the cloud, and drank of the Rock which followed them. This Rock was Christ," which was promised to come into the world. Moses also prefigured him by divers means, both by the manna which came down from Heaven, and also by the water which issued out of the rock, for the refreshing of the bodies of his people: nor is it to be doubted that the manna and the water had a prophetical mystery in them."⁴

John Lambert, another of the martyrs, expressed himself thus:—"God sendeth his grace where and when he pleaseth, either with the sacraments or without them; so that it is at his arbitrament how and when. Moreover, many lewd persons

¹ D'Aubigné and Dell.

² D'Aubigné's Reformation, vol. iv.

³ Fox's Acts and Mon. vol. ii. ⁴ Ibid.

being destitute of grace, receive the sacraments to their confusion; so that I cannot affirm that they give grace: yet in due receipt of them I suppose and think that God giveth grace, as he doth unto all good persons even without them also.”¹

At the Reformation, for the ancient term “high mass” was substituted the phrase “communion of the sacrament,” or simply “communion.” Some of the early reformers exerted themselves to restore the practice of a weekly or monthly administration; but the people generally could not be prevailed upon to receive it so often, and the attempt proved abortive. The rubric of Edward VI. required all married persons to “receive the holy communion on the day of their marriage.” The rubric now in force declares it to be “convenient that they should do so on that day, or at the first opportunity afterwards;” but also requires every parishioner to communicate “at least three times in the year.” This however has fallen into disuse. The same rubric orders that “if a man by reason of extremity do not receive the sacrament of Christ’s body and blood, the curate shall instruct him that if he do truly repent him of his sins, and stedfastly believe that Jesus Christ hath suffered death upon the cross for him, and shed his blood for his redemption, earnestly remembering the benefits he hath thereby, and giving him hearty thanks therefore, he doth eat and drink the body and blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ profitably to his soul’s health, although he doth not receive the sacrament with his mouth.”² This seems a near approach to spiritual views of the question.

Edward VI., in a letter to Bishop Ridley, states that “most of the altars in the churches” had been already taken down, and orders that the rest be removed, and instead thereof that “a table be set up in some convenient part of the chancel, for the ministration of the blessed communion.” The reason assigned is that, contrary to the popish notion, no sacrifice is offered, and that a table is most suitable to the occasion. The Book of Common Prayer, on the principle of conciliating all, uses both the terms, altar and table.

At a disputation held at Cambridge in 1549, before the king’s commissioners, the intricacies and difficulties of this question, as then understood, were searched into and debated at great length, in a gross and painful manner. Dr. Madew, one of the

¹ Fox’s *Acts and Mon.*, vol. ii.

² Burn’s *Ecclesiastical Law*.

disputants, says, "To be short and plain with you, most honourable audience, the whole universal world hath been and yet is sore deceived and deluded about the estimation of this sacrament."¹

Dr. Redman, an early English protestant, being asked in the time of his illness whether he thought that the very body of Christ was received with the mouth or not, paused and held his peace a while, and then replied, "I will not say so: I cannot tell. It is a hard question; but surely we receive Christ in our soul by faith. When you speak of it otherwise it soundeth grossly." His friend replied, "I am glad to hear you say so much. I fear lest that sacrament, and the little white piece of bread lifted up, hath robbed Christ of a great part of his honour." Then said the sick man, looking upward, "God grant us grace, that we may have true understanding of his word!" He also remarked, that the manner whereby Christ is there present and ministereth his flesh to the faithful is altogether inexplicable.²

Two French martyrs at Sanserre, declaring that the mass was superstitious and mere idolatry, said that to attribute any part of salvation thereto was "utterly to destroy the benefits of the sufferings of Christ, and ought not to be named by a Christian man!"³

In a conference between Ridley and Bourne, the former, a well-known and illustrious protestant martyr, with many other remarks, expresses himself thus:—"When you hear God's word truly preached, if you believe it and abide in it, ye shall and do receive life withal; and if ye do not believe it, it doth bring unto you death. And yet Christ's body is still in heaven, and not carnal in every preacher's mouth."⁴ He thus showed that the participation in an outward rite is not necessary, in order to partake of the body and blood of Christ.

Robert Smith of Windsor, another of those who proved by death the sincerity of their Christian faith, was asked at his examination before Bishop Bonner, how long it was since he had received the sacrament of the altar? His answer was, "I never received the same since I had years of discretion; nor ever will, by God's grace. Neither do I esteem the same in any point, because it hath not God's ordinance either in name or in other usage, but rather is erected to mock God." Bonner.—"Do ye

¹ Fox's Acts and Mon. vol. ii. ² Ibid. ³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid. vol. iii.

not believe that it is the very body of Christ, that was born of the Virgin Mary, really, naturally and substantially, after the words of consecration?" Smith.—"I showed you before it was none of God's ordinances, as ye use it; then much less is it God, or any part of his substance, but only bread and wine, erected to the use aforesaid. Yet if ye can prove it by the Word to be the body that ye spake of, I will believe it; if not, I will, as I do, account it a detestable idol, not God, but contrary to him and his truth!" After many raging words and vain objections, Bonner said there was no remedy but he must be burned. Smith.—"Ye shall do no more unto me than ye have done to better men than either of us. But think not thereby to quench the Spirit of God, nor to make your matter good; for your sore is too well seen to be healed so privily with blood: for even the very children have your deeds in derision!" He was consigned to the stake at Uxbridge in the reign of Queen Mary, in that year of death 1555.¹

John Philpot, another eminent martyr, being examined by the Bishop of London and others, protested: "There be two things principally, by which the clergy of this day deceive the whole realm; that is the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, and the name of the Catholic church; both of which they have usurped, having indeed neither of them! As touching their sacrament, which they term of the altar, I say now as I said before, that it is not the sacrament of Christ; neither in the same is there any manner of Christ's presence. And where they take on them the name of the Catholic church, they are nothing so, but call you from the true religion to vain superstition."²

In 1555 and the three following years, not less than two hundred and eighty persons were publicly burnt or otherwise executed, chiefly for their difference of sentiment on the mysterious question of the bread and wine, and many more died in prison. This was a tremendous exercise of the united power of church and state, and in support of what is held by all protestants to be false doctrine!

Bishop Jewel says, "We eat Christ by faith, and not by the mouth of the body; and it is the common resolution of the school-doctors, that the grace of God is not tied to any sacraments."³

¹ Fox's *Acts and Mon.* vol. iii.

² *Ibid.*

³ *On Sacraments*, p. 21.

"You have cast out ceremonics in the sacraments," sa Edwards in 1646, "as the cross, and kneeling at the Lord supper; and many cast out the sacraments themselves."¹

Bishop Taylor, though a very moderate man, declared, in consonance with the general views of his church, that without the offices of episcopacy "no consecration of the sacrament, no rite, no sacrament can be legitimately performed in order of eternity."²

By the Corporation and Test Acts, passed in the reign of Charles II., the taking "the sacrament of the Lord's supper was made necessary in England and Wales to the holding of a public places of trust, the object being the exclusion of dissenters—an object which was enforced for a century and a half. These acts had never extended to Scotland. The effect in England was, to make the ceremony in many cases a mere passport to office for the unscrupulous and the irreligious.

The Society of Friends, from their rise about the year 1650 have steadily declined the observance of this rite, believing with many other protestant reformers, some of whose remarks have been already quoted, that the true eating of the flesh and drinking of the blood of Christ is by lively faith in him, and must be the experience of every sincere believer, being a spiritual act independent of any outward ceremony. Their writing may be referred to for the reasons which they allege from Holy Scripture, that such a ceremony was not designed to be perpetuated as a standing observance under the gospel, that it has a dangerous tendency to draw off the attention from the spiritual perception and benefits of that experience; and that it has manifestly produced most serious injury in various ways to the professing Christian churches. To pursue such arguments further would not consist with the object of this treatise.

John Wesley declared, "He that truly trusts in Christ, cannot fall short of the grace of God, even though he were cut off from every outward ordinance, though he were shut up in the centre of the earth. There is no power in means; separate from God it is a dry leaf—a shadow; and in itself a poor, dead, empty thing."³ "You may have a token and receive the sacrament," said George Whitfield, "and perhaps at the same time be eating and drinking your own damnation. You are resting on the means of

¹ Neal's Puritans. ² Episcopacy Ass. ³ J. Wesley, Sermon xvi.

grace all the while, and placing religion in that which is only a mean of religion.”¹

The Duhobortzi (or Malakans) in Russia, before referred to, say that they always communicate or hold spiritual and life-giving communion with Christ; but the symbols of bread and wine they do not receive. They reside chiefly in the southern parts of the empire, and are found also in Lapland and Siberia. With these views of vital religion their moral character is said to be most exemplary.

Dr. Johnson gave it as his opinion, that deviations from the primitive mode in what is merely ritual may be admitted on the ground of convenience, and that the Roman catholics are as well warranted in withholding the cup from the people, as the established church is to substitute sprinkling for the ancient mode of baptism.²

Adam Clarke remarks “‘ Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life,’ &c.—*John vi.*—this can never be understood of the sacrament of the Lord’s supper. Jesus took bread; unleavened bread certainly. If any respect should be paid to the primitive constitution, then unleavened, unyeasted bread should be used. Will it not appear that the use of common bread is highly improper?”³ The question whether the bread should be leavened or not, was one great cause of the dissension between the Greek and Latin churches in the thirteenth century. The former used unleavened bread, and neither party would yield.

The high-church notion of self-restricted authority appears in the following, under date of 1820:—“A person not commissioned from the bishop may break bread and pour out wine, and pretend to give the Lord’s supper; but it can afford no comfort to receive it at his hands, because there is no warrant from Christ to lead communicants to suppose that, while he does so here on earth, they will be partakers in the Saviour’s heavenly body and blood.”⁴ On this principle, all such observances by nonconformist ministers are vain and fruitless.

In the form of communion composed by Drs. Ellert and

¹ Whitfield’s Sermon on the Kingdom of God.

² Pinkerton’s Greek Church.

³ Boswell’s Life.

⁴ A. Clarke’s Notes.

⁵ Dr. Hook, and Oxford Tracts, No. 25.

Neander, for the new evangelical church in Prussia, under the authority of the late King, no terms of actual "consecration" were used, the historical fact only being related, that Christ said "This is my body," &c.; "This is my blood," &c. Such was the state-expedient used to endeavour to reconcile the opposite opinions of the Lutheran and Calvinistic churches. Many however contended that this was no real sacrament at all, but only a narrative of the transaction; and that in this way even Jews and Mahomedans might be admitted to communicate.¹ Many conscientious Prussians suffered severely on account of their religious convictions, and especially on this subject of the eucharist.

If a literal interpretation is to be given to the language and example of the supposed institution of "the Lord's supper," a supper should now be strictly observed, and not the use of a sop or wafer only in the middle of the day. But in this, as in water baptism, a literal consistency has been departed from. Many protestants, while they retain the popish custom of receiving the bread and wine in a kneeling posture, and regard the ceremony as one of sacred obligation, acknowledge that they have not been able to arrive at a conclusion respecting it, which is fully satisfactory to themselves. The Anglican church forbids her ministers to "administer the communion to any but to such as kneel, under pain of suspension."² On the Continent the bread and wine are usually received by protestants while standing, and weekly or monthly. In Scotland they are received only twice in the year, in a sitting posture, and in complete silence: no person is allowed to communicate there, if known to be guilty of any breach of morality, and to this restriction great importance is attached. The canons and the rubric of the British episcopal church are equally strict on this point; and so small is the number of communicants in most places, that there are probably few cases of exception to the rule.

At a general meeting of Scotch episcopal ministers held at Perth in 1617, one of the articles adopted enjoined the practice of "kneeling at the communion," which proved more obnoxious to the people than all the others, being so identified in their minds with the idolatry of Rome, that they shrank from it with horror, and great excitement and opposition followed.³

¹ Laing's Notes of a Traveller. ² Canon 27. ³ M'Crie's Scottish Church.

The protestant churches in general which observe this rite receive the elements only as bread and wine, but symbolical of the flesh and blood of Christ. The papists receive them as transubstantiated into something holy and divine by the consecration of the priest. Hence the necessity that he should be of a separate, sanctified class, that he should observe celibacy; and hence the unlimited veneration and confidence which he enjoys among the people. Thus is one error fruitful in producing and strengthening others. Yet observes one, "the doctrine of a real presence, the mode mysterious and undefined, and beyond all human power of comprehension, is admitted by the formularies of the Anglican church, and has been held by numbers of its most pious and learned members; and is as far removed from the Romish tenet, as from the system of Zwingle and Hoadley, which reduces the sacred ordinance to a mere naked symbol."¹ The Church of England, though restricting the term "sacrament" to two rites, uses three others,—confirmation, absolution, and ordination,—by which grace is declared to be conveyed; and therefore, according to her own definition, she virtually upholds five sacraments. Great indeed are the difficulties involved in the idea of a permanent, outward institution!²

Whatever may be the professed principles of the Christian churches in relation to this rite, it is manifest that it obtains less regard than formerly from the religious community at large; and has lost much of that superstitious reverence with which it was formerly observed. The great majority of the Christian world have long given practical evidence which cannot be mistaken, that they do not hold it to be essential. The number of communicants, as they are termed, when compared with that of serious and devout worshippers, is in general extremely small. Wide differences of opinion on the mode, character and effects of the ceremony, and the dreadful persecutions following those differences, have doubtless tended to produce this result, and have led many to believe that, where there is so much of questioning, discordance and bitterness, the whole matter is open to reasonable doubt. There is also too much cause to fear, that religion itself has been called in question, and has lost its hold on the minds of many, on this very ground. Yet serious, reflecting persons, whatever may be their own doubts in respect to the ceremony, often hesitate to express them, from an unwil-

¹ Forester's Norway.

² Halley on the Sacraments.

lingness, either to shock the conscientious convictions of others, or to bring upon themselves suspicion and obloquy. They therefore merely disuse it, without undertaking to form a decided opinion, or to judge for others respecting it. Many of them evince that they have submitted to the operations of the Holy Spirit on their hearts, and that they fully appreciate the blessings derived from the offering of Jesus Christ "once" for all, for the redemption of fallen man. Such doubtless are permitted to feed on him by living faith, and to hold spiritual communion with him, thus partaking of true christian fellowship and redemption without the medium of the outward ceremony.

The reformation from papal forms must surely be carried farther, and be suffered to abrogate the two observances, still cherished by many protestants as sacraments; in the same manner as it has already abrogated grosser portions of them, and all the five others formerly acknowledged as such. Those who observe them are earnestly and respectfully requested to give the subject a serious and unprejudiced consideration, with a sincere aspiration to be rightly directed by the Holy Spirit.

The propriety of disarming secular rulers of all power to enforce either one view or another in such matters of individual faith, is abundantly evident from Scripture, and from the mournful experience of different ages and countries, as related in the preceding pages. How soon such absurdities and cruelties may be re-enacted, if the power be retained, it is impossible to say.

*Summary of different Sentiments and Practices, with respect to
the Lord's Supper, Eucharist or Mass.*

1st. Some would have it administered to all; others to believers only. 2nd. For a long period it was given to children, as is still practised in the Oriental churches. 3rd. Some have given it to dead persons. 4th. The Eastern church and most protestants distribute both bread and wine; the Roman catholics give the bread only to the people, but the wine to the priest alone. 5th. Some take the bread and wine before supper, others after supper. Many partake of them at dinner time, under the name of a supper. 6th. Some take them every day, others every week, some three times a year, and others once a year. 7th. Some have used them as a meal, most as a sop or form only. 8th. Some use leavened or fermented bread, others

contend for unleavened only. 9th. Some have the bread broken by the minister, others break it themselves. 10th. Some use wine only, others wine mixed with water. 11th. Some receive the bread and wine while standing, others sitting, and others again in a kneeling posture. 12th. Some use the kiss of peace, others omit it. 13th. Some receive it in an upper chamber, others in the place of public worship. 14th. The Roman catholics believe that the bread and wine are transubstantiated, or changed into the very body and blood of Christ. 15th. The Lutherans say that these are present consubstantially, or together with the bread and wine. 16th. Some protestants maintain that Christ is present sacramentally; others that the bread and wine are only figures or emblems of him. 17th. Roman catholics assert that the ceremony is an expiatory sacrifice for sin. 18th. Protestants differ widely among themselves respecting it; some alleging that it is instituted only in commemoration of the death of Christ; others that it is a means of spiritual grace. 19th. Roman catholics contend that the bread and wine, having been consecrated by the priest into the body and blood of Christ, ought to be elevated and adored. Protestants think this practice idolatrous. 20th. Most readily acknowledge that the ceremony is mysterious and beyond human comprehension. 21st. Some assert that it is essential to spiritual life, and therefore necessary to salvation. Others that it is profitable only, but not essential or necessary. 22nd. Some hold that it profits, *ex opere operato*, or by the mere use of the rite, except when resisted by mortal sin. Others that it profits only when the priest is sincere in his intention; and others again, only when the receiver possesses true faith. 23rd. Some hold that sinfulness in the minister does not destroy the virtue of the observance, others that the ministrations of wicked men are ineffectual to the good of the soul. 24th. Some believe that the ceremony can be properly performed only by a priest or minister, duly ordained by a bishop. Others that it may be properly administered by those not so ordained. 25th. Lastly — Others are of the judgment that no new outward ceremony was instituted by Christ at the last passover which he ate; and that his true supper is a spiritual communion of the soul with him, wherein the sincere Christian, by living faith in him, is graciously permitted spiritually to eat his flesh and drink his blood, to the renewal of the inward life.

Section 13.—On other matters relating to Divine Worship.

At the risk of occasional repetition, some further particulars under this head seem to require notice.

The worship of the primitive Christians, in the age succeeding that of the Apostles, continued for a time to be remarkable for its simplicity. The addresses of those who ministered were brief and fervent. The attention of the people was serious and devout. Most of them were poor and unlettered persons, who had made great personal sacrifices for their faith, and embraced it from a deep conviction of its truth. They generally met in private houses, and any were allowed to preach who believed themselves divinely called to do so. Passages from Holy Scripture were read, and short devotional hymns were occasionally recited or sung.¹

But this simplicity and absence of form did not long continue. The presbyter or bishop of each congregation or church obtained the sole right to preach or pray, the people, in the latter exercise, often joining, responding, or repeating the closing words. It soon became the practice in prayer to turn the face towards the east, in conformity with the custom of oriental nations. External ceremonies, although offensive to the spiritually minded, began to be multiplied, in order to arrest and gratify the senses, and thus to captivate the vulgar. The celebration of the Lord's supper formed an important part of worship. The bishops received additional honours. New offices and titles were created. The sign of the cross, which was supposed to afford especial protection, with various other mystical practices, was introduced. Jewish, heathen, and even military rites were borrowed, and were, with many variations in different countries, accommodated to the Christian worship. The addresses of the ministers lost their ancient simplicity and fervour, and became in most places studied orations, or superstitious rhapsodies. Exorcisms and heathen mysteries, but little altered, were held in respect and resorted to as true religious exercises.

In the fourth century, the bishops were elevated by Constantine to temporal dignity and imperial favour, when worldly greatness and honour, like a flood, invaded the church, still farther corrupting its simple character. The religion of the

¹ Mosheim, 1st cent., 4—6, &c.

² Mosheim, 2nd cent., 4—1—7.

Christians now differed very little in appearance from that of the heathen Greeks or Romans. Splendid "churches," gold and silver vessels, wax tapers, incense and images, with processions, lustrations, and other circumstances of pageantry, indicated grandeur and opulence; but these were accompanied with a mournful decay of vital religion. Augustine, declared that the yoke of religious rites, under which the Jews formerly groaned, was more tolerable than that imposed upon many Christians.¹

In the fifth century, the ordinary priests appear to have begun to preach in public. Chrysostom is said to have been the first presbyter who preached at stated times. Origen and Augustine did so by special permission. The sermons or public addresses were more adapted to excite admiration, than to enlighten or edify. The people were permitted, and even exhorted by the preacher, to testify their approbation of his address, with clapping of hands and loud acclamations. Divine worship was still performed by every nation in their own language, but rose gradually from one degree of pomp to another, and degenerated more and more into a gaudy spectacle.²

In the sixth century, the cause of true religion sank apace, and the reign of dark superstition was extended in proportion. Gregory the Great contributed largely to this result, by adding magnificent appendages to divine worship. Boniface V. made the churches places of refuge for all, including hardened criminals who fled to them for protection; a practice which encouraged depravity and crime. The Greek and Roman churches adopted new ceremonies widely different; so that the two bodies became gradually more at variance.

In the tenth century, the worship of the Virgin Mary, which had before been carried to a great degree of idolatry, received new accessions of superstition; and the institutions called the rosary and crown were borrowed from the devotional usages of the Saracens, to count the number of prayers offered. The rosary consisted of fifteen repetitions of the Lord's prayer, and 150 salutations or Ave-Marias; while the crown consisted of six or seven of the prayers, and sixty or seventy salutations, which were regulated by circumstances. The prayers of religious persons, for the souls said to be confined in purgatory, were accounted of great avail. A multitude of superstitious

¹ Mosheim, 4th cent.

² Ibid.

rites, insulting to true religion, and even shocking to common sense, were observed. This is sometimes styled the age of barbarism and ignorance: the stupid veneration that was paid to the bones and carcases of departed saints, and the savage and unnatural lives of monks and hermits, abundantly justify the designation.

In the twelfth century, the scandalous traffic in indulgences was begun by the bishops, and soon after was monopolized by the Pope. The abbots and monks, who were not qualified to grant them, resorted to other methods of enriching their convents. They carried the dead bodies and relics of the saints in solemn procession through the country, and permitted the people to behold and touch them at certain fixed prices; often gaining as much by these degrading exhibitions, as the bishops did by their indulgences. It was high time for a reformation to put an end to such gross impositions.¹

Among the strangely superstitious practices which prevailed, some writers enumerate "the creeping or hoisting up of the cross or crucifix to be kissed or worshipped on bended knees, the putting ashes on the head on Ember days, the bearing candles on Candlemas-day, the carrying palms on Palm-Sunday, as well as the sprinkling holy-water, giving holy bread, hallowing the font, knocking on the breast, crossing different parts of the body, and other like exorcisms and incantations."²

Before the reformation, a large proportion of the parishes of England had their pulpits occupied by persons from the dregs of the people, by loiterers on the ale-house bench, dicers, scarcely able to say by rote their pater-noster, often unable to repeat the commandments. The service of the church being in Latin tended to little or no edification; while of preaching there was scarcely any. Quarterly sermons appear to have been prescribed but not insisted on; for though mass was on no account left unsaid for a single week, sermons were sometimes omitted for twenty weeks together, and no blame followed. To be a preacher gave suspicion of being a heretic. The discourses consisted of scandals and invectives, miracles of saints, tissues of fables and absurd tales.³ Such continued the case to some extent, when

¹ Burnet's Hist. Reform.

² "Godly and Pious Inst. of a Christian Man." pub. 1537.

³ Latimer's Sermons; Blunt's Reformation.

protestantism was professed, many of the preachers being papists in disguise, and the most zealous ministers discountenanced by the ruling powers, who were afraid how far reform would carry them.

The Lollard or Puritan, on the other hand, preached on his own authority, without any licence from the bishop, in villages and church-yards, in fairs and markets. Going about bare-foot, in a blue or russet gown, he rejected pontifical habits, was strongly opposed to the use of church music and especially of organs, holding out to the ministers the duty of labouring like Paul with their own hands, and not being loose or secular in his expressions and conduct.¹

The people of Cornwall, who in 1549 had opposed the Reformation, (see page 428), addressed about thirty years after, a petition of complaint to Parliament, in very different terms, which may serve to show the low state of the parochial ministry under Queen Elizabeth.

" We are above the number of fourscore and ten thousand souls, which for want of the word of God are in extreme misery and ready to perish ; and this for want of neither maintenance nor place. For besides the impropriations in our shire, we allow yearly above £9,200., and have about 160 churches, the greatest part of which are supplied by men guilty of the grossest sins,— some fornicators, some adulterers, some felons, bearing the marks in their hands for the said offence ; some drunkards, gamesters on the sabbath-day, &c. We have many non-residents who preach but once a quarter ; so that between meal and meal the silly sheep may starve. Some ministers labour painfully and faithfully ; but these are not suffered to attend their callings, nor is it safe for us to go and hear them ; for though our own fountains are dried up, yet if we seek for the waters of life elsewhere, we are cited into the spiritual courts, reviled, and threatened with excommunication. Therefore from far we come, beseeching this honourable house to dispossess these dumb dogs and ravenous wolves, and to appoint us faithful ministers who may peaceably preach the word of God, that we be not disquieted by apparitors, &c., upon every light occasion."² This is a truly melancholy picture of the prevailing state of things at that period.

¹ Blunt's Hist. of Reformation in England.

² Neal's Hist. of Puritans.

14th Section.—On the Multiplication of Holy Days, Festivals, and Fasts.

A *holy day*, devoted to thoughts of heaven and to religious exercises, is one thing; but a *holiday*, in the general apprehension of the term, and in the dissipating character of its pursuits, is another and a very opposite thing.

“Certain it is,” says Fox the martyrologist, “that the apostles, being attentive only to the doctrine of salvation, gave no heed to the observation of days and times, neither bound the church to any ceremonies and rites, except those necessary things mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles; leaving all others free to the liberty of Christians, every man to use therein his own discretion. Wherefore the diversity among men was not greatly noted, nor uniformity required.”¹

The early Christians appear to have regularly used the first day of the week for the sacred duty of divine worship. The seventh day was also still observed for a while, especially by those who had been Jews. The anniversaries of remarkable events in the life of the Saviour, as well as the anniversaries of the death of himself, of his apostles, and of the martyrs, naturally attracted their serious remembrance; and as superstition invaded the church, began to be considered holy, and entitled to veneration.²

Socrates the historian, describing various practices with regard to fasting, says, “Because none can bring forth any written commandment of this matter, it is plain that the apostles left it free to every man’s mind and will, that none might be compelled by fear and necessity.”³

“Not barely the observance of Jewish feasts,” observes Neander, “but all forms and modes of particularising the Christian life by reference to certain times, are reprobated by the Apostle Paul as a Jewish practice, a descent from the pure Christian elevation to servile dependence on the elements of the world.”

Irenæus, about the year 195, writing to Victor of the diversity of days and fastings, remarks “Notwithstanding all this variety,

¹ *Acts and Mon.* vol. i.

² *Mosheim*, first cent. iv. 4.

³ *Eccles. Hist. lib. i. sect. 1.*

they kept peace among themselves, and we keep it still, and this difference among us commendeth more the concord of faith."¹ Thus the doctrine of Christian liberty remained sound in the church to that time.

The western Christians, pleading the examples of the apostles Paul and Peter, kept the paschal feast on the first day of the week next the anniversary of Christ's resurrection, or "Easter-day;" while the oriental churches, asserting the authority of the apostle John, observed the day of the ancient Jewish passover, or Lord's supper, being the fourteenth day of the first Jewish month, in whatever part of the week it fell. Violent contentions, increased by mutual jealousies, ensued on this and other accounts, and were protracted through several centuries.² Victor, Bishop of Rome in 290, excommunicated the churches of Asia Minor, on account of this dispute about the time of celebrating Easter. The Council of Nice, in 325, partially settled the controversy, by determining that the feast should be observed according to the Roman practice. At some periods, this single question, unimportant as it may now appear, excited apparently more earnestness and zeal than all other religious matters together. At length these dissensions broke forth into a total separation between the two churches, which has never since been healed.³

In the fourth century, the first day of the week, which had been much neglected, was, at the command of Constantine, kept with greater solemnity.⁴ Five festivals were generally celebrated, in commemoration of the chief events recorded in the

¹ Fox's *Acts and Mon.* vol. i.

² Neander, vol. i.

³ Mosheim's *Hist.*, 2nd cent. iv. 9, &c.

⁴ The Calendar was reformed by Julius Cæsar, A.U.C. 707, in order to correct the discrepancies which had gradually crept in, between the natural and the computed year. It was again reformed by Pope Gregory XIII. in 1582, and his computation being approved by men of science, has been generally followed by Roman catholics and more slowly by protestants. It was not adopted in Great Britain till 1752. "Eleven days, from September 3rd to September 14th, were omitted, and the year, instead of beginning on the 25th of March, was appointed to begin on January 1st." The nations connected with the Greek church still observe, however, the old period for commencing the year, and this variation yet exists between the Russian and the other European calendars. Easter, so called from a Teutonic heathen goddess, to whom sacrifices had been offered at that season, continues to be a chief festival of the Anglican, Romish and Greek churches.

New Testament ; viz., the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, and the effusion of the Holy Ghost or Pentecost. The gradual addition of many other holy days, occasioned by the pretended discoveries of the remains of martyrs, so far from tending to an increase of devotion, produced an entirely opposite effect. Instead of being employed in pious exercises, they were largely devoted, even in early times, to indolence, voluptuousness and criminal pursuits ; so that in the fifth century it became necessary to suppress the *Agapæ* or feasts of charity, at which the bread and wine were partaken of, on account of the many abuses attending them in the rapid decline of religion and morality.¹

In the fourth century Aerius of Pontus, a spiritually-minded man, although an ascetic, objected to the confining of fasts to set times ; maintaining that they ought to be observed with freedom, according to the spirit of the gospel, and the inclination and necessities of each individual. He found fault with the ordinances of the church, for having substituted the yoke of Jewish bondage to the law, in the place of gospel liberty.² Chrysostom also maintained that the Christian principle of celebrating festivals was not necessarily restricted to certain times, but embraced the whole life grounded in faith.³

Fasting, though much less rigidly observed than during the first inroads of declension, was long regarded as an effectual method of repelling the power of the evil one ; and numerous were the times appointed for the people to practise it. On fast days, they offered prayer while kneeling ; but at festivals, and on the first day of the week, in a standing posture, to signify rejoicing, the face being always turned to the east.

“Churches” in incredible numbers were erected in the sixth century, and many festivals were instituted in honour of saints, each having a solemn anniversary. These and other outward observances are said to have been adopted with a view to conciliate and gratify the heathen. In the seventh and eighth centuries, almost every pope added some new rite or festival, and it became an essential proof of holy zeal to divert the multitude with novel spectacles of devout mummery. Religion consisted almost entirely in a motley round of external performances, especially on the often-recurring holidays in honour

¹ Mosheim's Hist., &c.

² Neander, vol. ii. 343.

³ Neander, vol. ii.

of the saints and martyrs. Successive centuries witnessed the rapid multiplication of foolish superstitions, to the great injury even of the temporal interests of the community. The Emperor Charlemagne, in 794, found it needful to direct that no new saints should be worshipped, and that no chapels should be erected to their memory on the public highways.¹

Prince Hacon of Norway, apparently a sincere and devout man, attempted in the tenth century to plant the Christian church in that country, but by decreeing a large number of days to be observed as fasts, and devoted to the exercises of religion, as well as by other intemperate regulations, he excited a violent opposition from his people, and failed of success.²

The schism, which had long existed between the Greek and Latin churches, continued gradually to increase and ended in a complete separation about 1050; the supremacy of the emperor being maintained in the one, and that of the pope in the other. Each was as intolerant of the other, as the Latins were of "the heretics."³

A council held at Oxford in 1222 enacted that, among other festivals, should be observed within each parish, the day of dedication of the church to "its patron saint." This celebration is often noticed, and is thought to have been the origin of local fairs, feasts, revels and wakes, which are still continued, and which, down to the thirteenth century, were generally held in churchyards,⁴ being a gross degeneracy from a professedly religious original. From many Romanists the image of the patron saint even now receives more reverence than that of Jesus Christ.

In the thirteenth century, the celebration of a jubilee was enacted at Rome by Boniface VIII., with the utmost profusion of pomp and magnificence; and it was solemnly decreed that, in every hundredth year, those who should confess their sins, visit Rome and do penance, should obtain thereby entire forgiveness. His successors, finding the experiment answer well in a pecuniary sense, determined to repeat it more frequently, and ordained that the jubilee should be celebrated, at first every fiftieth, and afterwards every twenty-fifth year.

Islip, Archbishop of Canterbury in 1350, enjoined both ministers and people to pursue their bodily labours, under pain of

¹ Neander, vol. iii.

² Waddington's History.

Burn's Eccles. Law-- Church.

⁴ Fox's Acts and Mon. vol. i.

excommunication, on certain saints' days, which were "wont to be consecrated to unthrifty idleness."¹

About the time of Wickliffe, religion was deemed to consist in the observance of days, meats, garments, and such like circumstances. Times were so observed, that the holiness of the whole year seemed to be transported and put off to the season of Lent.² At the time of the Reformation, the number of holy days and festivals was much diminished in Protestant countries. By an Act of Edward VI. (5 and 6, c. 3,) "all Sundays," and twenty-seven other specified days, are enjoined to be kept holy, and none besides. Two others were added by the rubric. Another act of the same reign and the rubric direct the following to be "days of fasting, and abstinence from all manner of flesh: 1. The forty days of Lent. 2. The Ember days at the four seasons, being the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, after the first Sunday in Lent, the Feast of Pentecost, September the 14th, and December the 13th. 3. The three Rogation days, being the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday before Holy Thursday, or the ascension of our Lord. 4. All the Fridays in the year except Christmas day." These fasts were confirmed by various acts of Queen Elizabeth, and a penalty of twenty shillings, or one month's close imprisonment, was decreed for non-observance. The curate is still ordered by the rubric to give public notice, after reading the Nicene creed, what holidays or fasting days are to be observed in the week following. Four days of political notoriety are also to be for ever kept holy, viz. "The gunpowder treason, and the landing of King William III." "The martyrdom of the blessed King Charles I." "The restoration of Charles II.," and the coronation of the reigning Sovereign; a special service for each being appointed to be used.³ Such appears to be the canon law of England to the present time! Is it always to remain so?

One of the articles of a Scotch ecclesiastical assembly, held at Perth in 1617, related to the observance of five great holidays, and was the cause of much contention. It was objected that those relating to Jewish events were revivals of the ceremonial law of the Jews; and that the anniversary days of the birth and crucifixion of Christ were no more consecrated by those events, than was the form of the manger in which he was born,

¹ Neander, vol. iii.

² Burn's Eccles. Law.

³ Fox's Acts and Mon. vol. i.

⁴ Mosheim's Fourteenth Century.

&c., and that such as kept those days came under the charge of "observing days, and months, and times, and years,"—a practice viewed with much apprehension by the apostle Paul.¹

The Duhobortzi of Russia, already noticed under other heads, account every place and time alike holy, and use great simplicity in performing Divine worship. "Fasting," they say, "consists in abstinence, not from food, but from gluttony and other vices; in purity, temperance, humility and meekness."²

It cannot be doubted that true religion has suffered deep injury from the absurd multiplication of fasts and festivals, which has produced a practice, especially on the Continent of Europe, among both catholics and protestants, to have only what is termed a "morning service," not only on each holiday, but also on the first day of the week, the rest of it being given up to amusement or recreation. Although every day is in itself equally holy, yet this neglect is deeply to be lamented, as well as the opposite extreme, and is the natural consequence of it. The devout observance of the first day, and two or three attendances at divine worship in every week, are surely a very reasonable duty to be expected from every sincere, reflecting Christian!

Extraordinary festivals and instances of religious profanation took place occasionally in the Romish church; one of which was observed at Beauvais near Paris, in the following manner. "A young woman, the handsomest in the town, was selected, placed to ride on an ass richly harnessed, with an infant in her arms, both gaily dressed. *The bishop and clergy* following her, the whole formed a procession from the cathedral to the church of St. Steven. All having entered it, she placed herself near the altar, and then celebrated mass; explaining at the same time the fine qualities of the animal, and exhorting him to make a devout genuflexion, with a variety of other fooleries."³

Absurd and profane festivals, under the name of "*the feasts of fools*," were regularly celebrated, from the fifth to the sixteenth century, in several countries of Europe, *by both clergy and laity*; presenting a strange spectacle in the ridiculous mixture of religious and foolish ceremonies. They are said to have been instituted in imitation of the Saturnalia or heathen festivals, lasting for some weeks from the beginning of each year. At first, only the boys of the choir and young sacristans played the

¹ McCrie's Scottish Church History. ² Pinkerton's Greek Church.

³ Buck's Theological Dictionary.

principal part in them ; but afterwards, all the inferior servants of the church, while the bishop or highest clergyman of the place, with the canons, formed the audience. The young people chose from among themselves *a bishop, or archbishop of fools*, as he was called, and consecrated him with many ridiculous ceremonies, in the principal church of the place. He then took the usual seat of the bishop, and caused high mass to be said, unless he preferred to read it himself, and to give the people his blessing. During this time, the rest of the performers, dressed in various masks and disguises, engaged in licentious songs and dances, and practised all possible follies in the church. These incongruous practices, eminently calculated to convert religious observances into impious buffoonery, to throw contempt upon sacred things, and to foster a spirit of infidelity, were condemned by popes and councils, and forbidden in 1414 by the Parisian college of the Sorbonne ; but they continued to be stoutly defended, and were kept up till the time of the Reformation.¹

*Section 15.—On the Hallowing or Conjuring of Water, &c.,
the Consecration of Buildings, Ground, &c.*

A disregard of these matters, trivial as some of them may now appear to most protestants, was formerly deemed a sufficient proof of heresy, and treated by the ruling powers as a capital offence. In the Greek and Romish churches they are still strictly observed ; some reformed bodies retain them, and as of late years a strangely degenerate inclination has been evinced by a party in the Anglican church to esteem and revive them, some notice of the subject may not be out of season. It is also closely connected with that of water baptism and the supper.

Under the dispensation of the Levitical law, outward modes of purification were sanctioned by Divine authority ; various washings, baptisms, sprinklings, separations and anointings were used for legal purgation ; and were, with the other ceremonies of that typical system, tokens of corresponding spiritual operations in the gospel day.

Whatever some have absurdly alleged in favour of holy water, from the spittle and the clay used by our Saviour in opening the eyes of the blind man, it is evident that neither our Lord's example nor precepts, nor those of his Apostles, furnish any reasonable ground for such a notion. Under the pure and

¹ Buck's Theological Dictionary.

spiritual dispensation of Christ, holiness is not an attribute of insensible things and places, but of moral agents alone, viz., of the Divine Being, and of those who love and serve Him, being cleansed by the sanctifying operations of his Holy Spirit on the heart, and knowing their sins to be forgiven for Christ's sake.

The use of that which was termed holy water was introduced very early into the Christian church, and affords one among many palpable proofs, how soon ignorant superstitions and vain practices made an inroad on Christian simplicity and truth; and how little reliance is to be placed on any principle or observance whatever, merely on account of its antiquity, unless it is clearly deducible from the authority of the New Testament. The speedy operation of the apostacy, of which the Apostle said even in his day, "the mystery of iniquity doth already work,"¹ obliges the inquiring Christian to distrust everything which has not in the sacred page an evident authority for its permanence.

In times of early superstition, holy water was on special occasions "sprinkled at the church-door on those who entered." Fox remarks that he will not assert that it sprang from the idolatrous usage of the gentiles; yet that it was an old custom among the Romans, that the priest stood at the entrance of the temple, and having in his hand olive branches that had been dipped in water, sprinkled with them such as went in. The use of holy water, he says, so resembles this custom, that it appears to have proceeded from it.² Dr. C. Middleton, writing from Rome in 1825, remarks, "The ceremony of sprinkling persons with holy water is so notoriously borrowed from paganism, that the catholic writers make not the least scruple to own it."³

In the fourth century, vessels of water were placed at the doors of the churches, that those who entered might wash their hands—a practice that had its origin from similar usages among the ancient Israelites and Romans. It was connected with the exorcisms introduced in the second or third century, and formed, with crossings and other actions, part of those mystic operations.

The awful form used in the Romish church, for hallowing or conjuring water, is thus given by Fox, "I conjure thee, thou creature of water, in the name of God the Father Almighty, and in the name of Jesus Christ his Son our Lord, and in the

¹ 2 Thess. ii. 7. ² Acts and Mon. vol. iii. ³ See his Free Enquiry, &c.

virtue of the Holy Ghost, that thou become a conjured water, to expel all power of the enemy," &c.¹ The priest then crossed himself three times. Salt was conjured in the same way, with a prayer to the Almighty that He would bless and make it holy, concluding thus: "That it may be to all them that receive it health of both body and soul!" Can we be surprised that the term "conjurer" has become used to imply grossly deceptive agency?

An ancient decree prescribes the use of holy water in these terms: "We bless water, mixed with salt and sprinkled among the people, that all sprinkled therewith may be sanctified and purified; which things we command all priests to do. For if the ashes of the heifer, being sprinkled upon the people, did sanctify and cleanse them, much more doth water, sprinkled with salt and hallowed with godly prayers, sanctify and cleanse."²

Water used in the ceremony of baptism was previously consecrated by the priest, with prayer and the sign of the cross, and this was deemed indispensable. It was then considered to be endued with the virtue of the Holy Ghost, and of the cleansing blood of the Saviour. Hence Jerome, Nazianzen, and other fathers as they are termed, maintained that the recipients of baptism were "washed in the laver of regeneration," and "dipped in the blood of Christ."³ The Church of England also alludes, in the baptismal office, to the baptism of Christ in Jordan, as having "*sanctified water, to the mystical washing away of sin.*" And a prayer follows, on every occasion of sprinkling an infant, that the same effect may be produced. That which is called "the consecration of the elements" in the eucharist is a somewhat similar rite, but applied to the bread and wine, apparently with greater professed effects.⁴ In fact, all such hallowings and consecrations suppose a power in man to give holiness and moral virtue to physical, inanimate objects; and though sanctioned and enjoined under "the law of command-

¹ Fox's *Acts and Mon.* iii. 10.

² Ibid.

³ Bingham's *Christian Antiquities*, xvi. 10—4.

⁴ In the accounts of the last passover supper, of which our Lord partook with his disciples, both the Greek words used by the evangelists, and translated "blessed," may be and sometimes are rendered "gave thanks." Many eminent writers assert that this is the true sense here, and that no "blessing of the elements" took place. From thence is derived the term "Eucharist," or giving of thanks.—Matt. xxvi. 26; Luke xxii. 19, &c.

ments contained in ordinances," there is good ground to believe that they are fulfilled and were repealed by Him, who "blotted out the handwriting of ordinances, nailing it to his cross."¹

Flowers and branches, wax tapers, and many other articles used in devotional rites, are still professed to be hallowed by forms which may be seen in the Roman Missal. The Catholics often sprinkle themselves with holy water, in their churches and chambers, by way of purgation before they engage in prayer. At Rome, Moscow and other places animals are sprinkled with it once in the year, to keep them healthy, frequently amid shouts and jests of buffoonery. With it the Russians profess to consecrate their dwelling houses, and almost every article of furniture. This is indeed one great business of the priests in the superstitious Greek church. The water is blessed by casting a cross into it, or by holding a cross over it.

The Roman ritual (like that of the Anglican in the seventy-second canon) forbids the exorcising of any person without the bishop's leave. The following is an account of the process of exorcism, as observed in the Romish Church. "The ceremony is performed at the lower end of the church, towards the door. The exorcist first signs the possessed person with the sign of the cross, makes him kneel, and sprinkles him with holy water. Then follow litanies, psalms and prayers; after which the exorcist asks the demon his name, and adjures him, by the mysteries of the Christian religion, not to afflict the person any more. Then laying his right hand on the demoniac's head, he repeats the form of exorcism, viz. 'I exorcise thee, unclean spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ; tremble, oh Satan! thou enemy of the faith, thou foe of mankind, who broughtest death into the world, who hast deprived man of life, and hast rebelled against justice; thou seducer of mankind, thou root of all evil, thou source of avarice, discord and envy!'" The form of exorcism, for houses and other places supposed to be haunted by unclean spirits, is much the same with that for a person possessed.²

How applicable are the words used by Paul on a different occasion, "Let it not be once named among you."³ These practices however, and others equally unchristian and absurd, found way, and gradually acquired a strong hold among professing Christians, during the dark ages of apostacy, and even to this

¹ Colos. ii. 14. ² Buck's Theological Dict.—Exorcisms. ³ Eph. v. 3.

day they are by no means wholly rejected. The recital of many of them at length would be only painful and disgusting. Their principle was clearly derived from the notion of magic and supernatural secret influence, which obtained large credit in the heathen world. Thus the honour due to Christ and to his Holy Spirit was given to the priests, to their performances, and to the various articles on which they pretended to confer miraculous sanctity !

Two results of these practices especially contributed to uphold them. The one was, that they obtained from the ignorant credulous multitude, a superstitious regard and veneration for the performers; and the other was, that, as means of filling their pockets, such pretended conjurations were extremely convenient.

Holy ointment also, prepared and blessed by the priest, was used in many cases for sacred purposes. Some judgment of the effect believed to be produced by this process, may be formed from the words of Cyril. “ Beware that you take not this ointment to be bare ointment; for as the bread in the eucharist, after the invocation of the Holy Spirit, is not mere bread, but the body of Christ, so this holy ointment after invocation is not bare or common ointment, but it is a gift of God, that makes Christ and the Holy Spirit to be present in the action.”¹ Great mystery was maintained respecting all these matters, as Basil remarks. “ Baptism, the eucharist and the oil of chrism were things that the uninitiated were not allowed to look upon.”² Do not all these ceremonials stand more on the same ground than is usually supposed ?

The papists consider the ceremony of extreme unction entitled to the dignity of a sacrament. The laity are anointed on the palm of the hand, but priests on the back, because their palms are supposed to have been already consecrated by ordination. The oil, with which the sick person is anointed, is said to represent that divine grace, which is at the same time poured into the soul. The form thus expresses the remission of sins granted to the sick ; “ By this holy unction, and his own most pious mercy, the Almighty God forgive thee whatever sins thou hast committed by the sight (when the eyes are anointed), by the hearing” (when the ears are anointed), and so on. Even some of the reformed churches retain most objectionable language in

¹ Bingham’s *Christ. Antiq.* xi. 10—4.

² *Ibid. x. 5—4.*

this rite. In early times it was supplicatory, it is now declaratory. The ointment used by the Greek church in Russia, for the chrism or confirmation, is composed of more than twenty ingredients, and is consecrated annually by the bishop with great solemnity.

The temples were accustomed to be hallowed among the ancient Romans. It was carefully provided that, in every new temple, one of the priests, solemnly holding a pillar of it by his hand, should make the dedication to the particular divinity intended. From hence and from the Jews the practice was introduced among Christians.¹ The places for divine worship used by the early believers were thoroughly plain and simple; the men and women occupying distinct parts. After persecution had ceased, and multitudes of converts had forsaken the heathen temples, many of these, under favour of Constantine and others, were converted into churches; and noble fabrics richly adorned were erected in the cities in honour of Christ: pictures and images quickly followed. The "consecration" of buildings for Christian worship is said by some authors to have been first decreed by Euginus, about 154, who was also the first that styled himself pope. The altars of the gods became altars of the saints; the images and statues were newly named, the curtains, tapers, incense, votive tablets, and the vessels for holy water, &c. remained the same.² The religion was a sort of modified heathenism or nominal christianity. "Churches" were built over the tombs of martyrs, and frequented only at stated rare periods; others were set apart for the usual religious assemblies. Both kinds were consecrated to reputed saints with great splendour, and with peculiar rites borrowed chiefly from those of the heathen priests. The early British used very humble erections for divine worship, till Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury about 670, urged them to erect substantial edifices, and introduced chanting with other Romish novelties.³

It was about the fourth century, as Francis Close asserts in a treatise on the subject, that "church architecture arose and flourished. As yet, however, churches were not built in the

¹ See Cicero, in oratione pro domo sua; also 2 Kings xi. 14.

² Bingham's Christ. Antiq. xi. 10—4.

Pictorial History.

form of a cross. The distinction of chancel and nave, and the separation of one part of the congregation from another, were unknown; there is no trace till then of the consecration of churches; the extravagant notions about holy places had not become prevalent. No notice appears of any particular aspect, and the virtue attributed to building them east and west had not yet been discovered.” The chancel or eastern part, in conformity with heathen notions, is deemed the most sacred, the communion table or altar being always placed in it, and the nave being the body or centre of the edifice. The incumbent or lay impropriator is in many parishes liable to repair the chancel. The choir, or elevated part now used for singers, was formerly occupied also by the minister, for a portion of the service in parochial worship. This is now the case only in cathedrals. The rood loft, used to set up relics or images for public veneration, was another raised part, often richly decorated. The churches themselves were at length generally built, through the prevailing superstitious idea, in the shape of a cross, and in the same exact position with respect to the points of the compass; and these rules are still carefully observed, even by some protestant bodies. From the consecration of buildings, the priests soon went on to proclaim the necessity of hallowing almost every thing in them, as altars, bells, candles, books, ashes, palms, swords, banners, pictures, crosses, &c., &c.

No church or burial-ground was allowed to be used, until after the assignment of the house and glebe, and the performance of the rite of consecration. This was, of course, to be paid for; and the priests, in order to augment their revenues, not unfrequently pronounced after any particular circumstance had happened to afford them a plausible pretext, that the same buildings had become desecrated, and that it was necessary again to perform the purifying, expensive process, which they termed “reconciliation.” The States of Germany complained to Pope Adrian in 1533, of many grievances, by which the people suffered from the covetous priests. One of these was, that after ground had been consecrated, and used as a place of burial for many years, if any accident, quarrel, or other outbreak occurred in it, the spell of consecration was pretended to be broken, and to require repetition, before the place could be used again by Christian people. This was a sore oppression, manifestly prac-

tised with many others, for the purpose of replenishing the pockets of the ecclesiastics.¹

A canon of the British synod of Calchuith in 816, ordains that the diocesan who consecrates a church shall take care that the patron saint shall be pictured on the wall, on a tablet or on the altar.² To the images of patron saints more devotions are frequently paid in Roman catholic countries than to that of the Saviour himself.

Baronius states that the consecration or baptism of bells, which has been before referred to, began in 968, when Pope John XIII. christened the great bell of the Lateran church, and named it "John." The absurd custom was next introduced, of using godfathers to the bells, and expecting responses: this last was condemned in the sixteenth century as a superstitious invention.³ To what absurd lengths may even professing Christians be deceived and corrupted! The bells are still consecrated or baptized in Italy, and only by the bishop, which implies that the rite is deemed peculiarly sacred.

The Paulicians in the eighth and ninth centuries "considered the confounding together of Jewish, Christian and political elements, to be the cause of the corruptions of the dominant church. Hence," says Neander, "they carefully avoided every thing that approached to a resemblance of Jewish or Pagan rites; never calling their places of assembly temples, but oratories or houses of prayer. In this people we see the incipient stages of a reaction against the confusion of Jewish and Christian elements, a reaction which spread more widely in succeeding centuries."⁴

The enlightened but persecuted Waldenses, about 1200, bore a decided testimony "against the benedictions and hallowings of creatures, and the rabble of other rites and ceremonies," brought in by the darkness and cupidity of man. They asserted that the conjuring of water and palms was a mere farce, that the temple of the Lord was the wide world, and that his majesty and holiness were not to be restrained within outward walls. The peculiar vestments and ornaments of priests, the corporases, &c., they declared to be vain and useless. They were well versed in the Scriptures, and endeavoured to bring all doctrines and practices to the standard of the New Testament.⁵

¹ Fox's *Acts and Mon.* ² Burn's *Eccles. Law—Church.* ³ Encycl. Brit.

⁴ Neander's *Hist.* 3rd period, 4th sect. ⁵ See Jones, Mosheim, Fox, &c.

The directions to the bishops of the Anglican church for consecrating places of worship are very minute and superstitious. Many of the early Reformers and martyrs objected to the empty notion of holiness and reverence with which they were regarded, and which seems to have originated the custom among most religious bodies, of uncovering the head on entering such places. The denomination of "churches," given to them, though properly belonging to the believing worshippers, tended to produce confusion of ideas. The costliness and ornaments of the buildings were also complained of, as being at variance with Christian simplicity and lowliness. This objection was probably strengthened by a knowledge, that the funds required for their erection, and for the towers, bells, &c., had been obtained under false pretences, or raised with great difficulty and pain, by the forced contributions of many who toiled on in penury and hardship.

In a piece already cited, entitled "The Ploughman's Complaint," and published in 1360, the author alludes to mistaken views on religion, and handsome adornments of places of worship, as follows:—"Lord, our belief is that thine house is man's soul, that thou madest after thine own likeness. But now men make great houses of stone, full of glazed windows, and call them thy houses and churches. And what worship is it, to build thee a church of dead stones, and to rob thy living churches of their bodily livelihood? Thou sayest in the gospel that true worshippers of God worship him not in that hill beside Samaria, nor in Jerusalem, but in spirit and in truth," &c., &c.¹

A modern writer asserts that, in the time of Wicliffe, about 1370, the people were taught to worship nothing but what they saw, and saw almost nothing which they did not worship. Religion consisted in externals and superficial observances. Hence sprang so many sorts and fashions of hallowings, gestures and garments. Wicliffe asserted that the consecration of churches and other kindred ceremonies had been introduced only from motives of covetousness.

Walter Brute boldly declares, "In the church of Rome many exorcisms and conjurations are practised, which are called by the priests benedictions and consecrations. But I ask them, whether they believe that the things and creatures so exorcised and hallowed have that operation and efficacy given them which

¹ Fox's Acts and Mon., vol. i.

they pretend? If they so believe, every child may see that they are far beguiled. For holy water, being of them conjured, hath no such power in it as they command. Let a man behold the blessing or hallowing of their fire, water, incense, bread, wine, the church, the altar, the churchyard, ashes, &c., &c., and I believe that he shall find out many errors of the heathen magicians and charmers!¹

Several conclusions were exhibited to Parliament, in 1395, by certain English reformers, against corruptions then prevailing in the church. The fifth of these is—"That the exorcisms and hallowings, consecrations and blessings over the wine, bread, wax, water, &c., &c., are the very practices of necromancy rather than of sacred divinity. If the book of exorcising or conjuring of holy water, which is sprinkled in the church, were true, we think certainly that holy water were the best medicine for all kind of sickness and sores; the contrary whereof experience teaches us."²

About 1410 was published a small work written by John Grimes, an English Lollard, on the corruptions of the age. The following is the seventh article:—"That the material churches should not be sumptuously decked with gold, silver and precious stones; but that the followers of the humility of Jesus Christ ought to worship their Lord God humbly, in mean and simple houses, and not in great buildings, as the churches be now-a-days.³ About this time there was a great revival of Greek and Roman architecture, without a corresponding increase of religion. "Rivalry gave an impulse to the building of gorgeous structures, where each order vied with its antagonist in rich mosaic, glittering relievo, and frescoed walls. But who paid for all these? The patrimony of orphans, swindled from the lawful heirs by the conveyancers of the confessional or of the dying pillow. Splendid cloisters were the price of blood and the atonement of assassination. Every crime had its tariff in masses or masonry. Lucky is the land, if the beggar does not change his whine for the bluster of the bandit, when, by successful manoeuvring, he has got a legal transfer of the living man's property or the dying man's inheritance."⁴ Woe be to the shameless impudence and avarice thus keenly rebuked!

Pope Martin, about 1440, ordered that all suspected persons

¹ Fox's Acts and Mon., vol. i. ² Ibid. ³ Ibid. ⁴ Gavazzi.

should be closely examined on a variety of opinions, attributed to John Huss and Jerome of Prague. The fifteenth of these was—“Whether a man contemning purposely the rites of the church, and the ceremonies of exorcism, of catechism, and the consecration of the water of baptism, be in deadly sin or not?” From hence it may be gathered that he esteemed it a deadly sin to disregard these ceremonies, and that such a disregard of them was a general characteristic of reformers.¹

Tyndal testified that the ceremonies of the church had “brought the world from God, by an outward show, glorious appearance and shining of hypocrisy; by feigned and usurped fasting, praying, watching, singing, offering, sacrificing, hallowing of superstitious ceremonies, monstrous disguising, &c. &c.—Churches,” said he, “are for preaching only, and not as they be used now. Christ, taking away the law, to make us free and at liberty, did most of all suppress and disannul the outward observances, which consisted in persons, places, garments, meats, days and such others, so that their use should be to all men most indifferent. The temple of God is not stones and wood, neither was any house called his temple, and used as such for Christian worship in the time of Paul.”² The majority of the reformers boldly avowed that the consecrations by the priests were utterly vain and worthless—mere shallow fictions, to obtain for themselves money and estimation from the ignorant people. Surely such deceptive practices ought to be entirely abolished!

Well would it have been if Luther had swept his house clean from the popish ceremonies and notions, and not given the sanction of his name to many absurd, unscriptural observances, which have troubled his church and obscured its lustre, rendering it “little more than a half-way house from popery to protestantism.” And this remark applies not to Lutheranism alone!

In Gardiner’s letter to Ridley, 1545, pleading for the use of images and holy water, he expresses himself very superstitiously and at great length. “Now,” says he, “I will speak somewhat of holy water, on which I send you a chapter in the history Tripartite, where Marcellus the bishop bade Equitius his deacon, in the fourth century, to cast abroad water which had been hallowed by him, to drive away the devil; and it is noted how the devil could not abide the virtue of the water, but vanished

¹ Fox’s *Acts and Mon.* vol. i.

² Tyndal’s *Wicked Mammon*.

away ; and for my part it seemeth the history may be true," &c. &c. What Ridley replied to this does not appear, but we may be well assured that he dissented from these idle fictions.¹

Thomas Hawkes of Essex, already referred to for his sentiments on baptism, being examined by Bishop Bonner, was asked " Will you have no ceremonies in the church—not one ? What say you to holy water ?" Hawkes.—" I say to it as to the rest, and to all that be of the making of him that made them." Bonner.—" Why, the Scriptures do allow it." Hawkes.—" Where prove you that ?" Bonner.—" In the Book of Kings, where Elizeus threw salt into the water." Hawkes.—" Ye say truth. The water being corrupted, Elizeus threw salt into it, and it became sweet and good ; and so when our waters be corrupted, if ye can, by putting in salt, make them sweet, clear and wholesome, we will the better believe your ceremonies." Bonner.—" How say you to holy bread ?" Hawkes.—" Even as I said to the other," &c. &c.² Robert Smith also, on his examination by Bonner, was asked, " What say you to holy bread and holy water, to the sacrament of anointing, and to the rest of such ceremonies in the church ?" To which he boldly replied, " I say they be baubles for fools to play with, and not for the children of God to exercise themselves in : therefore they may go among the refuse!" The papists were very furious against him ; and, as he terms it, " baited" him again and again before his execution.³ For the avowal of such decided sentiments, these and many other enlightened and excellent men sacrificed their lives.

George Fox, about a hundred years after, thus describes the purposes of his own call and that of the early Friends. " I was to bring people off from the world's vain religions, that they might know the pure religion, visit the fatherless, the widows, and the strangers, and keep themselves from the spots of the world ; then there would not be so many beggars, the sight of whom often grieved me, denoting so much hard heartedness among Christian professors. I was to bring them off from the world's fellowships, prayings and singings, in forms without power, that their fellowship might be in the Holy Ghost ; from Jewish ceremonies, from heathenish fables, from men's inventions and worldly doctrines, by which they [turned] the people about this way

¹ Fox's Acts and Mon.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid. vol. iii.

and the other way, from sect to sect ; from all their beggarly rudiments ; from their schools and colleges for making mimics from images and crosses, and sprinkling of infants ; from the holy days and vain traditions, gotten up since the Apostles' day. In the authority of the Lord's power, I had to declare against them all, and against all that preached not freely, being as it were as had not received freely from Christ."¹ His views on these and other points were very clear and scriptural, and were maintained with great plainness and boldness, many uniting in the

On the subject of places for divine worship, Milton says, " notwithstanding the gaudy superstition of some, still devoutly ignorant to temples, we may be well assured that he, who is ordained not to be laid in a manger, despairs not to be preached in a barn ; and that by such meetings as these, being indeed most apostolical and primitive, the people will in a short time advance in Christian knowledge, and in reformation of life."²

The following account of "the consecration of St. Catherine's Creed Church" in London, as late as 1630, by Laud, afterwards Archbishop, may be sufficient to show the monstrous superstition, and even blasphemy, which accompanied such ceremonies. "It was enough," as has been observed, "to have made even Popish cardinal blush ; and no protestant can read the account without indignant concern." It took place too merely while the building had been repaired, and was not a solitary instance. "The bishop came, attended with several commissioners in civilia. At his approach to the west door of the church, which was shut and guarded by halberdiers, some that were appointed for that purpose cried with a loud voice, 'Open, open ye everlasting doors, that the king of glory may come in !' The doors being opened, the bishop with some principal men entered. Immediately he fell down on his knees, and with his eyes lifted up, and his arms spread abroad, he said, 'This place is holy, the ground is holy ; in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, I pronounce it holy.' Then walking up the middle aisle, he took up some of the dust, and threw it into the air. On approaching the communion table, he bowed towards it five or six times, and returning went round the church with his attendants in procession, saying first the hundredth and next the nineteenth psalm, as prescribed in the Roman pontifical.

¹ See his Journal, year 1648.

² Considerations on Hiring.

He then read several collects, praying God to accept that beautiful building; and concluding thus—‘ We consecrate this church, and separate it unto thee as holy ground, not to be profaned any more to common use.’ In another collect he prayed that *all*, who should thereafter be buried within the circuit of that holy place, might rest in their sepulchres in peace till Christ’s coming to judgment, and then rise to eternal life and happiness. Then sitting under a cloth of state, he took a written book, and pronounced curses on those who should profane that holy place, by musters of soldiers, or keeping profane law courts, or carrying burdens through it, &c., &c.; and at the end of every curse he bowed to the east, and said ‘ Let all the people say amen.’ Having ended about twenty curses, he pronounced a like number of blessings on all that had had any hand in the building, and on those that had given or should give charities, plate, ornaments or other utensils; at the end of every blessing bowing and saying as before. Next came the sermon, and then the sacrament as follows. In approaching the altar he made five or six low bows, and coming up to the side where the bread and wine were covered, he bowed seven times. Then after reading many prayers, he came near the bread, and gently raising the corner of the napkin, looked at it; immediately letting fall the napkin, he retreated hastily a step or two, and made three low obeisances; he then advanced, and having uncovered the bread, bowed three times as before. Next he laid his hand on the cup, which was full of wine with a cover on it, stepping back he bowed three times before it; then coming near and lifting the cover, he looked into it, let down the cover, retired and bowed as before. Then the elements were consecrated, and the bishop, having first received the sacrament, gave it to some principal men in their surplices, hoods and tippets; after which, many prayers being said, the solemnity concluded !”¹

Happy would it have been for the true interests of the Christian world, if the reformation, or the more recent changes, had effected an entire abolition of such presumptuous rites. Yet great as were the superstition and arrogance of the actor in these proceedings, it must be deeply deplored, that his

¹ Buck’s Theological Dictionary.

opponents carried their vindictive feelings so far, as to stain their hands with his blood.¹

Herschell remarks, in reference to the consecration of churches which he witnessed in Palestine, “ Now I will ask any candid member of the Church of England, whether this silly apeing of popish ministers is expedient, [especially] in places where hitherto Christianity has been seen only through the medium of Romish and Greek churches? Should not the great aim of protestants be, not thus to identify themselves with popery, but to show that their christianity is something very different? ”²

The churches of Italy, with their embellishments, marbles, jewels, gold and silver ornaments, paintings and statuary, are reckoned to have cost more than the value of the fee simple of the whole Italian peninsula—an enormous outlay of capital in an unproductive manner, and so many evidences that superstition received more attention than the true interests of the people.

“ What a prodigy of art,” said one, “ is the Church of St. Peter’s. It must have cost its weight in gold.” “ I should rather

¹ Bingham states that burials were not allowed to take place in cities or churches for the first three centuries, and were long after forbidden from them by the emperors. The first step towards the practice was the building of churches over the graves of martyrs, and bringing their relics into them. The next was the allowing kings and emperors to be buried in the yard or porch. In the sixth century the people began to bury in the churchyard, and the monarchs in the church itself. The whole matter was left in the ninth century to the discretion of bishops and presbyters. The consecration of cemeteries was first recognised in the sixth century. Graves and burying places were esteemed sacred by both heathens and Christians without consecration. The former mostly burned the body, and put the ashes in an urn above ground. The Christians abhorred this practice, and buried the body entire: the former conducted the funeral obsequies by night, but the latter in the day.—*Christian Antiquities*.

Till the time of the Reformation, the seats in places of worship were generally moveable, and no property was claimed in any seat or pew; all belonging to the rector, whether inappropriate or not. Of later times, particular families have been permitted to establish claims to certain pews, as private property, and to transmit them by legal transfers; to the inconvenience of the public, and sometimes to the encouragement of indecorous behaviour. In some modern erections, the rents of pews form a chief part of the income of the ministers. The provision of free seats has, however, been of late years encouraged. These observations relate of course to the established church.

² Visit to my Fatherland.

call it aceldama, or the field of blood," said a second, "since its price was not so much gold as blood." "Truly," replied a third, "your remark is just. It was built with money derived from the sale of indulgences sent into Germany by Leo X."¹ Such are the plain comments of intelligence. This evil was however overruled for good, and proved the means of first arousing the righteous zeal of Luther. It must not be forgotten that full remission of sins has often been held out, as a motive for assisting to erect cathedrals, and other splendid ecclesiastical edifices.

"The fact must be admitted," says a modern writer, "that wherever extravagant attention was paid to church architecture, there the most debasing superstition prevailed, and the most notorious corruptions were dominant. Superstition and church decoration were coeval from the beginning."² Another modern author, a great admirer of architecture, observes, "I do not know, as I have repeatedly stated, how far the splendour of architecture or other art is compatible with the honesty and usefulness of religious service. The longer I live, the more I incline to severe judgment in this matter, and the less I can trust the sentiments excited by painted glass and coloured tiles."³

Much is it to be lamented that several of the dissenting bodies, forsaking the simplicity of their predecessors, are closely imitating the Church of England in the style and decorations of their houses for divine worship. In the place of plain, moderate, useful edifices, elegant structures are rising up, highly embellished, extravagant in cost, and often sacrificing convenience to splendour. Thus is the old low, corrupt principle, altogether inconsistent with the example of the lowly Jesus, re-introduced and set in operation; the vain attractions of external show evincing the "earthly mind," exhausting the church funds, and rivalling, it is to be feared, if not exceeding the consideration due to the holy internal influences of the Spirit of Christ.

In the eastern churches, everything is designed to be symbolical, according to a system handed down from early ages. The four columns of the dome are emblems, as is pretended, of the four evangelists, as the dome itself is of heaven, to which mankind have received access by means of the gospel which they

¹ Dealings with the Inquisition.

² Francis Close on Church Architecture.

³ Ruskin's Stones of Venice ; Appendix.

wrote. The central part, called the *sanctuary*, is typical of the holy of holies in the ancient temple; and the *veil* is represented by the curtain, which divides it from the rest of the building. The Greek church is still debased by much gross superstition. The blessings, consecrations, crossings and sprinklings seem to be almost endless, and extend to the houses, the stables, the blossoms, the fruit, the flocks, the waters, and most other things. The priests inculcate the notion, that without their blessing all is unholy, and will prove unproductive. On the other hand they have a solemn service once in the year for cursing the heretics.¹

One of the most gross instances of imposition, practised under colour of religion by Christian ministers in the present day, is the pretended miracle of holy fire, performed annually by the two Greek and Arminian bishops of Jerusalem, "in Easter week, on the anniversary of Christ's resurrection." Most travellers who visit Jerusalem, speak of this exhibition at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, in the strongest terms of reprobation. Dr. Richardson calls it "a grand quackery and juggle, played off by a charlatan on the ignorant multitude." Thousands of Greek pilgrims come from all parts, full of eagerness to witness it, and to light their torches from the sacred flame, in blind confidence of thus obtaining salvation. Games and sports of all kinds are celebrated, and so extreme are the excitement and pressure, that many deaths occur every year!

The priests are reproached and derided by the Latins and Turks for this imposture, which is called the Grecian fire; but having continued it so long, and finding it a lucrative contrivance, they are now unwilling to avow the truth, lest the people should generally forsake their church, and themselves should lose the perquisites. May there be no other Christian community, in which feelings akin to this fear still exist with respect to any observance! In 1841, the metropolitan of the English Episcopal Church saluted the authors of this imposture as "Holinesses," and addressed them in an epistle, assuring them of "reverence and honour." Surely a primary duty towards them would be to denounce this fraud!

By most of the people of Naples, a religion without its frequent repetition of miracles is held to be no religion at all.

¹ Kohl's Russia.

Some who disbelieve these pretensions, extend their disbelief unhappily to all that is related of Christ and his apostles, and indulge in immorality. Between the two classes very few if any are said to be found, who embrace pure, genuine christianity.¹

16th Section.—On the Commencement and Suspension of the Reformation.

Thus have been historically but briefly surveyed various opinions and observances, deeply tinctured with superstition, most of which arose in a lengthened period distinguished by extraordinary darkness and ignorance, both mental and spiritual,—a period which had been specially foretold as “the falling away,” the apostacy or blasphemous reign of “the man of sin.” Professing Christians forsaking the simple spiritual character of their holy religion, as promulgated by its Divine Founder and his primitive disciples, and exercising their own worldly desires and inventions, gradually set up an ecclesiastical system of human policy and priestly avarice, by which outward ceremonies, instead of being discontinued, were, under new names, perpetuated, rendered attractive and multiplied; their degrading bondage, unfelt and unavoided, was embraced with eagerness: and the Christian ministry, far from being marked by self-denial, sincerity and humility, was made “a cloak of covetousness,” a mask of hypocrisy, and a routine of pageantry; so that man, and not God, was honoured and exalted.

For the Jewish passover was substituted the eucharist or mass; the privilege of feeding on Christ and supping with him spiritually, by living faith, being too much lost sight of. For circumcision arose, not “the circumcision of the heart,” but the sprinkling of infants with water. For the ancient feasts and fasts of the Jews, were established outward feasts and fasts of the Christians; the attention not being turned to the true spiritual sustenance, and to the perpetual fast from sin and self-indulgence. For the high priests of the Jews, were set up the pope and the temporal heads of the Christian churches, invading the prerogative of Christ, our “faithful high priest” for ever, “not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.”² For the Jewish priesthood and Levites, were established priests or ministers of another order, interfering with a due sense and exercise of the privilege of the Christian priesthood,

¹ Dealings with the Inquisition.

² Heb. ii. 17, and vii. 16.

conferred on every true believer. To the sacred temple at Jerusalem succeeded consecrated Christian temples or "churches;" the true dedication of the temple of the heart and its spiritual services and offerings being greatly overlooked. Holiness was attributed to particular persons, orders, observances, places and times; instead of being felt to depend on the daily condition of every man's soul, in immediate relation to his Maker, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.

Hence, for one outward and ceremonial system, was substituted another no less outward and ceremonial; the senses were feasted, the imagination was gratified; but the work of divine grace on the heart, subjecting it to the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, and the extension of the kingdom of Christ over the church and in the world, were neglected or greatly impeded. An alliance took place between the ecclesiastical and civil powers, and its evils became forcibly exemplified, in the upholding of these outward views of religion by political authority, and in the enforcement of certain ministers, forms, ceremonies and observances on whole nations of men, at the arbitrary pleasure of a few superstitious individuals in high places.

It is, nevertheless, a satisfaction to know that amid deep prevailing degeneracy, and in spite of such combined authority, eminent witnesses have been raised up from age to age, like their divine Master, to "bear witness to the truth," "contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," though often under severe sufferings, inflicted for their faithfulness by the ruling powers: and that many experienced Christians under various names continue in large degree to take spiritual view of our holy religion.

The compilers of the Anglican Common Prayer freely acknowledged in the preface, that "the gospel of Christ is not a ceremonial law, as was that of Moses; but a religion to serve God in the freedom of the Spirit, not in the bondage of the figure or the shadow." Merle D'Aubigné well remarks to the same effect, "If God had intended that christianity should be like the Mosaic law, chiefly an ecclesiastical, sacerdotal and hierarchical system, he would have ordered and established it in the New Testament, as he did in the Old. But nothing is found there like this. All the declarations of our Lord and of his Apostles tend to prove that the new religion given to the world is life and spirit; not a new system of priests and ordinances. 'The kingdom

of Christ cometh not with observation, neither shall they say lo here or lo there; for behold the kingdom of God is within you.' ”

It was observed by Stillingfleet, and the observation is important “all obligation is resolved into one of these two, the moral nature of the action, or a positive law. Those therefore, who plead the obligatory nature of scripture examples, must show either their moral character, or a rule binding us to follow them.”

“The relation of the individual with nature,” says Joseph Mazzini in 1850, “was the soul of paganism, as the relation of the individual with God has been the soul of actual christianity. Perhaps, in religion, the age of the symbol is rapidly passing away, and a solemn manifestation may be near, of the idea as yet hidden in the symbol.”¹

“Christianity,” remarks another modern author, “seems to be resolving itself insensibly into two great divisions—the one pure, spiritual, scriptural, and altogether purged from ceremonial forms of worship, and external influences of human power, either of church or state—the other altogether ceremonial, and founded on the imaginative and æsthetic elements in our mental constitution, rather than on our reasoning faculties. The European mind will take shelter in one or other of these two extremes, and undoubtedly at last in that which is purest, simplest, most spiritual, and best adapted to the intelligence of enlightened men, as the suitable worship of their Creator.”²

From a very early period of the church, there have been successive bodies of Christians, under various names and in different countries, stigmatized and persecuted by the authorities in church and state as heretics, who have regarded the religion of the Redeemer as much more spiritual in its character and requirements, than it was considered to be by the ruling powers. Such—to say nothing here of eminent individuals besides—were the Donatists of North Africa in the fourth century; the Euchites or Massalians of Western Asia about the same period; the Paulicians of Thrace and Asia Minor in the eighth century; the Cathari, or Pure, of France and Italy, in the twelfth; the Albigenses and Waldenses of the same countries very soon after; the Lollards of Germany and England

¹ Royalty and Republicanism in Italy.

² Laing's German Catholic Church.

in the fourteenth; the Huguenots of France and the Protestants of the rest of Europe in the sixteenth; the Puritans of England and their Nonconformist descendants but little later; the Friends in the seventeenth; the Duhobortzi and the Methodists in the eighteenth century. Some of these bodies were very numerous, and subsisted through several hundred years, under the same or different names. To bring them into contempt, they were often charged with evil doctrines and practices which they wholly disclaimed, and nearly all were the subjects of severe persecution. Some of these people consisted however of two parties,—the moderate on the one hand, and the violent and enthusiastic on the other; the excesses of the latter being frequently imputed unjustly to the whole. This series of spiritually-minded Christians has been too little noticed by ecclesiastical historians, their own feelings having often tended in the opposite direction; but it is a very important feature in the general history of the church, and furnishes great cause for thankfulness and encouragement.

That there were dark periods, in which we cannot trace the existence of pure, uncorrupted christianity, is of very little moment to those who are indifferent to the priestly dogma of a direct succession. There may have been, and doubtless there were, pious individuals, who had some glimpses of genuine truth, and endeavoured to act accordingly. And when we consider the mixed character and imperfect state of man, and even of enlightened believers of the present day, how little there is of unsophisticated truth, and of uncontaminated motive, we shall feel disposed to conclude that there has always been some degree, either larger or smaller, of light and of holiness, but often mingled and corrupted with error and unrighteousness. He who “winked at the times of ignorance” and idolatrous depravity among the heathen, and even then “left not himself without witness,” has promised to be with his people to the end of the world, and has in these latter days in an especial manner “commanded all men everywhere to repent,” sending forth his good Spirit to convince mankind of sin and of holiness. So that both good and evil, light and darkness, righteousness and sin, in various proportions, appear always to have existed in the world, however few, poor, despised and persecuted may have been the followers of the truth.

It is worthy of special remark, that religion grew more and more outward and ceremonial, as the apostacy advanced in the dark ages ; that nearly all the different religious societies and reformations which have since sprung up,—some occasional outbreaks and declensions excepted—have aimed at the attainment of greater degrees of spirituality, and a more fervent piety ; and that each successive advance has lopped off some of the ceremonial excrescences, in order to make the system more simple, and more conformable to the apostolic pattern than that of the body from which it sprang. Thus, as the degeneracy of the Christian church consisted largely in the setting up of a new priestly order, and in the adoption of outward observances, outward notions, and outward modes of expression, insisting too much on the letter, the flesh, and too little on the spirit, the life, and relying too much on human authority ; so the work of the reformation, as far as it has proceeded, has been under great conflict in an opposite direction ;—to withdraw the dependence of Christians from man, his claims and performances, and to fix it on Christ, and the operations of his Spirit on the heart ; to bring the churches back to primitive simplicity, freedom, spirituality and purity. Although much has been already accomplished, yet much more remains to be done in this respect. Primitive zeal has grown cold, and the disposition has been too general, to remain satisfied with the first reformation, and to stand still where the early reformers planted their feet, without following up the teachings of Christ to a higher stage of Christian experience, contrary to the hope and expectation of many of those excellent men.

“ Protestantism,” observes Dr. Birch in his preface to the life of Tillotson, “ can be nothing less than a renouncing the religion of man’s contrivances, and a return to the religion which God has revealed in the Bible. When we have done so, we shall be qualified to take up the work of the reformers, and to complete it with a happier success.”

“ Follow me no farther than you have seen me follow the Lord Jesus,” said John Robinson, an eminent nonconformist minister about the year 1624. “ If God reveal anything to you by any other instrument of his, be as ready to receive it as ever you were to receive any truth by my ministry ; for I am verily assured that the Lord has yet more truth to break forth out of his holy word. I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of the

reformed churches, who are come to a period in religion, and will at present go no farther than the instruments of their reformation. The Lutherans cannot be drawn to go farther than what Luther saw, and the Calvinists stick fast where they were left by that great man of God, who yet saw not all things. This is a misery much to be lamented ; for though they were burning and shining lights in their times, yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God. It is not possible that the Christian world should come so lately out of such thick anti-christian darkness, and that perfection of knowledge should break forth at once.”¹

“There hath been no further reformation,” said John Salt-marsh complainingly in 1647, nor any higher attainment than the bishops made, and the synod in England formerly. And all the reformation that hath been endeavoured hath been only in some outward things, as discipline or church government, and some outward ordinances of baptism and the supper; not any purer or more glorious discoveries of God, or the Spirit, or Jesus Christ, or our union with the Spirit as to spiritual things.”²

Herschell remarks, “God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” More than eighteen centuries have elapsed since this declaration, and yet we find in the Christian church,—instead of universal testimony that it is the Spirit alone that quickeneth, and that the flesh profiteth nothing,—a cleaving to outward rites and ceremonies, as if these were still the appointed channels through which the Spirit is conveyed. If I am still to be dependent on a priest, for the sustenance or the commencement of my spiritual life, I see little to distinguish the Christian from the Jewish dispensation. The Church of Christ may still be edified by *real* gifts and *real* sanctity ; but the ritual and official are mere “beggarly elements,” passed away for ever ! A large proportion of the professing church seems still in the condition of the Samaritan woman, obliged to go to the well of Jacob to draw water, instead of possessing in themselves “a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” “Christianity was not designed to be a counterpart, but a contrast to the former dispensation—a contrast so far, that all that was ceremonial and material in the one was to be succeeded by that which is spiritual and real in the other.”

¹ Neal’s History of Puritans, vol. ii. ² Sparkles of Glory,—Saltmarsh.
² Herschell’s Fatherland.

Of the Anglican church Dr. Arnold says, "Instead of striving to grow up into a true branch of Christ's glorious church, perfect even after the infinite perfections of its Head, its notions of excellence have been lowered by the actual constitutions in church and state, by idle language about the doctrines of the reformers, and the excellence of the British constitution. As if the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, scarcely waking as they were from the accumulated ignorance and insensibility of thirty generations, could offer anything to satisfy our aspiration after Christian excellence, as if the consummated work of the Spirit of God were to be found in the dregs of the papal and feudal institutions."¹ "How discouraging to the Christian would be the successive disappointments that have followed every reformation, were it not for "the sure word of prophesy," in which God hath promised, "yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." Glorious day ! when falsehood, and error, and everything that opposeth itself to the truth, shall 'become like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor."²

The remarks of Chevalier Bunsen on this subject are well worthy of serious consideration : "The question at this moment is, not how to carry out, but how to prepare, a second, grand, reconstructive reformation ! The porch of the temple must first be more thoroughly cleansed than it was in the sixteenth, and above all, restored more honestly than it was in the seventeenth century ; and lastly, the work must be handled more practically than has yet been done by some of the schools of this age. In the meantime let every one cleanse his own heart and house as well as he can. When the feeling of the misery which is coming, and a real faith in the saving truth which is in Christ, shall have thoroughly penetrated the nations, then will the Spirit of God assuredly come upon them with might, either for the reformation or for the annihilation of the existing churches. Whether this crisis will end in the renewal or in the destruction of the present nations and states, will depend upon the position which they take, in the face of the demands of the Gospel and the wants of the times. For every nation and age has its time and its day of restoration, after which its fate is sealed."³ May Britain attend to these testimonies and warnings

¹ Fragment on Church.

² Herschell's Fatherland.

³ Bunsen's Hippolytus, vol. iii. p. 37.

ere it be too late, proceeding as they do from the mouths of many concurrent witnesses !

A silent but very powerful impediment to the great work of farther reformation is presented by state endowments, and by the close union of civil with ecclesiastical authority, bringing into the professing churches motives of selfishness and insincerity, secularizing the sacred calling of the ministry, rendering all such churches subservient to political control, and chaining down the workings of enlightened conscience. When this unholy alliance between churches and states shall be dissolved, then will be removed one formidable obstacle to the elevation of the pure standard of christianity, and then, as christians act up to their glorious privileges, it may be reasonably expected that, unconstrained by civil might and authoritative interference, will widely prevail and bless abundantly the nations of the earth !

CHAPTER XXXV.

ON HERESIES.

THE term "heresy" was applied by the Jews to the doctrine of the first preachers of christianity. Thus Paul boldly declared, "After the way which you call *heresy*, so worship I the God of my fathers."¹ The same apostle mentions as heretics those Christians who fell into error, and who after two admonitions were simply to be rejected.² In the early succeeding church, the term was used for any religious doctrine or practice, which was adjudged by the ruling powers to be at variance with those of the apostles. They who refused to submit to the judgment of the church, to the decision of the councils, and other recognized authorities, were maligned and denounced as heretics. Such are not to be confounded with unbelievers, who altogether rejected christianity; nor with those nonconformists or dissentients obnoxiously termed "schismatics," who differed chiefly on minor or disciplinary questions. These various classes are, however, frequently confused one with another. When the Christian church became degenerate and corrupt, orthodoxy denoted only the religion of the majority, and heterodoxy that of the minority; so that true Christians may be more often recognized among the minority, who, like the apostles themselves, were traduced as heretics or schismatics, than among the ruling party, who were considered the true sons of the church, and who were greater in numbers and influence; but in both parties much mixture of good and evil must be expected. Truth was often influential chiefly among "the faithful few," the despised "remnant," the little persecuted ones; while the high professing church, the claimants of divine right, of apostolical succession, and of infallibility, though upheld by the civil powers, were deeply sunk in darkness and error; and so extensively was this permitted to prevail, that "all the

¹ Acts xxiv. 14.

² Titus iii. 10.

world" is said to have "wondered after the beast" and worshipped him, exclaiming "Who is like unto" him?¹

The subjects on which differences of opinion have chiefly existed are those which are mysterious in their nature, such as the origin of evil, the nature of the Deity, the character of Christ, the connection between Judaism and Christianity, and the application to the latter of the principles of heathen philosophy; as well as the observance and importance of outward rites and holy days, the government of the church, the authority and claims of ecclesiastics, &c. &c.² From eighty to one hundred and fifty religious systems, classed as heresies, are mentioned by early ecclesiastical writers; but Lardner has shown that many of these ought to be excluded from the list; and some others appear to have had but few adherents.

The standard of orthodoxy in the Roman catholic church rested professedly on two grounds—Holy Scripture and tradition. Its system was declared to be "that which has been held always, everywhere, and by all." The avowed outward standard of protestantism is Holy Scripture alone, independently of tradition and of general acceptance or rejection. The one class cries "Hear the church;" the other "Hear the Bible." Of course the protestants have been condemned as heretics by the former. Of every true Christian church Christ is the foundation and chief corner-stone; and whatever be the general reputation or professed authority of any religious body, or however correct its acknowledged creed, unless He influence it by his Spirit, it will be a dead, corrupt mass, incapable of spiritual sensation and energy. If his professed followers have not his spirit of love dwelling in their hearts and influencing their actions, in vain, according to his own words, do they claim for themselves by high professions of orthodoxy the character of Christians. The tree being evil its fruits will be corrupt, however fair they may appear to man. In the present mixed state of things this

¹ Rev. xiii. 3.

² A curious illustration of the judgment of the church on heresy is afforded by the well-known fact, that as late as the seventeenth century, Galilei the eminent astronomer was adjudged to be a heretic and punished as such, because he declared the sun and not the earth to be the centre of the system, contrary to the general opinion, and to that of the self-styled "infallible successor of St. Peter!" Nor is this by any means a solitary case of the denunciation of philosophical truth by church authority!

evil result will be proportioned to the want of obedience to his divine instructions and government.

Wicliffe considered heresy to consist in a bad life, as well as in false opinions. No good man, he thought, could be a heretic in the scriptural sense of the term. In accordance with this opinion Bishop Taylor remarks, in his *Liberty of Prophecy*, "No heresies are noted in Scripture but such as are errors practical. In all the animadversions against error in the New Testament, no person was condemned but something was amiss in practice. Heresy is not an error of the understanding, but an error of the will. If a man be innocent in his life, though deceived in his doctrine, his error is his misery, not his crime: he may be an object of pity, but by no means a person consigned to ruin, and he is to be left to the judgment of God. It must be an open crime of which any cognizance can be taken." Taylor observes, The heresy of the Gnostics taught that "it was no matter how men lived, if they did but believe aright; which wicked doctrine Tatianus, a learned Christian, so detested, that he fell into the contrary extreme—that it is of no consequence what a man believes, but only what he does. And thence came the sect of the Encratites. Both these errors sprang from too nicely distinguishing the faith from the piety and good life of a Christian. They are both but one duty, and however they may be distinguished if we speak as philosophers, they cannot be distinguished when we speak as Christians."¹

When those who have formed the predominant party in the professing church have possessed the aid of secular power, but have been controlled by the spirit of the age or by other circumstances, as is generally the case in the present day, they have been unable to do more than to denounce as heretics those who differed, to separate them from Christian fellowship, and to enforce their pecuniary contributions and general submission. But when unhappily no such controlling influence has existed, they have too often employed their authority, through an unholy combination, for the express purpose of correcting and punishing such dissentients; and hence have arisen horrible persecutions on account of religion, to the great disgrace of the nominal church, and to the incalculable injury of the cause of christianity.

¹ *Liberty of Prophecy.*

But what do these conflicts and severities prove? That men should sink into a state of latitudinarianism and apathy? Or that that about which they have contended is altogether false and untrue? Certainly neither the one nor the other. They prove, on the contrary, that there is a reality and a truth in the Christian religion, which men will seek, and which they are bound to seek, through fire and blood, a perceptible spiritual force which sustains in the darkest hour, an element of immortal life, which, received through Christ, and having conquered by suffering, shall still survive and triumph over death and hell!

The persecutions of the early Christians by the heathen emperors of Rome do not, of course, belong properly to this subject. It may however be observed that they occurred chiefly at ten distinct periods, between the year 66, under Nero, when Paul suffered, and that of Dioclesian, in 313. The cruelties perpetrated on many of the devoted victims were horrible in the extreme, producing intense agonies of almost every kind; the bare recital of which is enough to shock the feelings of humanity. It has been computed that in the course of them, from one and a-half to two millions of Christians perished by the violence of their persecutors, and by the fatigues and distresses with which they were harassed. Yet, notwithstanding all these afflictions, christianity was more pure, and made more real progress in that period, than when it came to be allied with imperial power, to bask in worldly honours and emoluments, and when the rulers of the church had that power at their own command!

CHAPTER XXXVI.

BRIEF NOTICES OF PERSECUTIONS INFILCTED BY SOME PROFESSING CHRISTIANS ON OTHERS DEEMED HERETICS, &c.

1.—*Early Ages.*

THE main object of this volume having been to expose the evils of an alliance between civil and ecclesiastical authority, and of magisterial interference and compulsion in matters of religion, there remain to be briefly noticed the violent wrathful measures adopted by the state powers to effect their purpose, and to wreak their anti-christian vengeance on those who felt bound to obey God rather than man.

Though the rulers of the early Christian church were not slow to pronounce an anathema on whatever they judged heresy, yet capital proceedings against those considered to be heretics were generally condemned. The Roman emperors, who had adopted the Christian profession, made many laws for fining, banishing, and otherwise punishing such; and some of the Manichees, a body of mystical ascetics, suffered death for their errors. Priscillian and his followers, another sect of ascetics who prevailed in Spain, being prosecuted by two bishops before the Emperor Maximus, were put to death about the year 384; but the persecutors were greatly blamed for it.¹ In both these instances persecution produced effects quite opposite to those designed.

The Donatists, in the fourth and fifth centuries, many of whom were considered intolerable heretics, were subjected only to inferior penalties. Some of them, called Circumcelliones, were very extravagant and violent, so that many of the bishops contended that the civil sword ought to be used against them. Augustine however opposed this course, and repeatedly and earnestly pressed the magistrates on no account to shed blood—although to a certain extent, and not very consistently, he had urged the duty of the state authorities to employ coercive measures. Many others of the Donatists were moderate and peace-

¹ Neander's History, 2nd period, sect. 4.

able, and had clear views of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom; yet they were often comprehended together in the rigour of the general laws.¹

One of the first instances of severity and cruelty that was not censured by the church, occurred, as Burnet states, in the fifth century, under Justin I., who ordered the tongue of Severus, a fierce ecclesiastic, to be cut out. In the eighth century Justinian II. burnt many of the Manichees in Armenia. And in the end of the twelfth century, the Bogomiles, a sect of Euchites, were condemned by the patriarch and council of Constantinople to be burnt.

The Paulicians before referred to under different heads, a considerable and spiritually-minded sect, in Asia Minor and Thrace, were severely persecuted as heretics by the ruling powers in the eighth and ninth centuries, and 100,000 are said to have perished, till at length they took up arms in their own defence. But, as Milner truly says, "where secular policy begins, there the life and simplicity of vital godliness end. When the Paulicians began to rebel against the established government, to return evil for evil, and to defend their religion by arms, negotiations and alliances, they ceased to be "the light of the world," and "the salt of the earth," as they had been for more than a hundred and eighty years: they lost the solidity of true honour, as all have done in all ages who have descended from the grandeur of the passive spirit of conformity to Christ, and have preferred to that spirit the low ambition of earthly greatness."²

Whatever was condemned as heresy was looked on as a sin against God, and the worst of crimes. To make it appear the more heinous offence, public burning was judged the most proper punishment, being also a representation of everlasting burning. It was a common practice at the execution of heretics to fasten about their neck scraps of scripture, and other evidences of their supposed guilt, found in their possession, that the whole might be burnt together.³ Of all the matters which in England were condemned as heresies, and punished in this awful manner, the differences of opinion with respect to the bread and wine have been by far the most prominent and fruitful of victims.

¹ Neander's History, 2nd period, sect 4.

² 9th cent. chap. ii.

³ Gilpin's Wicliffe.

Manifold as these differences were, and mysterious as were the points in question, excuses were rarely admitted at the time of the Reformation by the combined politico-ecclesiastical authorities, and the bloody statutes "de hæretico comburendo" were enforced with rigid and dreadful severity. It is not an easy matter, in this day of outward ease, for the mind to frame an adequate idea of the horrors suffered by the devoted victims, or of that noble fortitude with which many of them sustained the awful barbarities inflicted. Yet it is well to learn to appreciate, through the consideration of such events, the value of the liberty which we are permitted to enjoy.

2. ALBIGENSES, WALDENSES, &c.

About the year 1200, a large number of innocent persons in the south of France, having long been disgusted with the corruptions of the popish ministers and worship, separated from the public religious assemblies. The fury of persecution soon fell upon these poor people, known as Albigenses, and 200,000 of them are said to have been destroyed within a few months. They had long been a numerous body, existing under different names in several kingdoms of Europe. Those residing in the valleys of Piedmont were termed Waldenses, and in that country was their principal settlement. They were spiritual in their religious views, and inoffensive in their conduct; well versed in the Scriptures, and rejecting many of the observances of the church of Rome. Proceeding farther in this course, and testifying against the prevailing apostacy in religion, they at length attracted the attention of the papal authorities. They were examined and rebuked, threatened and punished, excommunicated, and at length, not forsaking their principles, were persecuted without mercy. In 1209 Innocent III. proclaimed a crusade against the Albigenses, and promised to all who took part in it plenary forgiveness of their sins. An army of 300,000 men devastated their country and deluged it with blood for three years. Further crusades followed, and the persecution is asserted to have destroyed within twenty years nearly a million of these devoted people. The Waldenses also suffered extreme severities from the relentless "Holy Inquisition," which had been established in 1206 principally with a view to their reclamation or destruction.

Dominic and his companions, finding that they could not convince them by preaching, persuaded the civil magistrate to burn all such as obstinate heretics who would not conform. In order to do this by authority, the arbitrary Council of Lateran decreed in 1215, that all heretics should be delivered over to the secular power to be extirpated. Rulers who did not carry out this law were to be deposed by the Pope, their subjects absolved from allegiance, and their dominions to be given by the pontiff to any other more faithful prince. This was termed a holy general council, and has already been often referred to. The decree was fatal to the Counts of Thoulouse, who first fell under its censures; and so terrified were many other princes of Europe, that in order to save themselves and their sovereignties, they submitted their subjects in great numbers to the judgment of the ecclesiastical courts.

The Waldenses were harassed with dreadful cruelties in Germany about 1250, and in Piedmont about 1300; the fires of persecution continuing to rage with fury year after year for a very long period, because they could not conscientiously conform to the established mode of worship. In 1488, Innocent VIII. determined again to have recourse to military power, and 18,000 soldiers were raised for the purpose of extirpating these poor people from their quiet valleys. But the Waldenses, ceasing through want of faith, to rely upon Divine protection alone, and forgetting the true forbearing nature of the kingdom of Christ, retired to the mountain fastnesses, and at length took up arms in their own defence. They were of course unable to repel their numerous assailants, and great numbers fell on both sides for several years. At the time of the Reformation there are said to have been more than 800,000 of them in Europe. Another dreadful persecution broke out in 1650 against this suffering people. They made on that occasion little or no resistance, and excessive cruelties were perpetrated upon them for several years. It is to the credit of Oliver Cromwell, and of Milton his secretary, that they pleaded nobly on their behalf, and their advocacy was not without success. In 1685 violence was again used against them, and was met with determined resistance. Many thousands perished, and most of the remainder were driven into foreign countries; yet they still survive, and retain in their native vallies a testimony for the protestant faith.

3. FRANCE.

Few if any countries have produced more martyrs than this. The Albigenses in the south have already been mentioned. Twelve religious persons, condemned as heretics, were burnt at Orleans in the time of King Robert, about 1200. Under Tramish, a savage persecutor, in the former part of the sixteenth century, hundreds of the Huguenots or protestants were brought to the stake, because they would not conform to the catholic faith. Great cruelties having been perpetrated upon them during a long period, they at last resisted with force of arms in 1560, and much blood was spilled on both sides. A dreadful destruction of them again took place in the reign of Charles IX., on the occasion of a royal marriage in 1572; when many of their principal persons, having been invited to Paris under a solemn oath of safety, were basely murdered in different ways. The queen dowager of Navarre was poisoned; Coligni, admiral of France, was assassinated in his own house, and his body thrown out of a window. In Paris alone about 10,000 protestants of all ranks were cruelly butchered within three days. From thence the massacre spread through the whole kingdom; 200 persons perished at Meaux, 500 at Orleans, and 800 at Lyons. The whole number destroyed on this dreadful occasion, which is known as "the massacre of St. Bartholomew," is stated differently by historians; some computing that 60,000, and others that 100,000 lost their lives. It was a shameful aggravation of these horrors, that great rejoicings took place at Rome on receipt of the news, and a general jubilee was proclaimed, because "the French infidels" were supposed to be exterminated.¹ The country was afterwards devastated by frequent wars between the two religious parties, who became fierce political partizans. In 1598, by the enactment termed the Edict of Nantes, under Henry IV., the protestants acquired full liberty of conscience. They had however brought great injury on their cause by resorting to violence, and repelling force by force. It has been computed that, within forty-three years, no fewer than 200,000 persons suffered death in France for the sake of religion, beside those who perished in the wars! Yet there still remained 760 protestant churches.

¹ Thuanus' History.

In the time of Louis XIV., 1685, the Edict of Nantes was solemnly but perfidiously revoked, and a still more cruel destruction of the protestants took place; unheard-of cruelties were practised on innocent men, women and children, and many thousands perished to an unknown extent; 50,000 industrious families of the reformed are said to have quitted France, carrying with them the best manufacturing skill of their country. The dreadful tale is enough to make the heart shudder; and it is a lamentable consideration, that men calling themselves Christians could be guilty of such barbarities, and persuade themselves or pretend that they were "doing God service!"

4.—BOHEMIA, &c.

From a remote period, a body of pious Christians existed in Bohemia and Moravia, who stood aloof from the superstitious doctrines and observances that had sprung up in papal darkness. Many of the Waldenses, on being driven out of their own country about the year 1300, took refuge among them, and were the means of exciting a revival of zeal for true religion. About 1350, the toleration usually extended by the government was withdrawn, and these poor people, unable to meet except in private houses and secret places, were exposed to fierce persecutions. Great numbers suffered death for their religious principles, of whom John Huss was burned in 1415, and Jerome of Prague in the following year. The Hussites were hunted like beasts of prey, and treated with savage barbarity. This rousing them at length to forsake the Christian duty of forbearance, and to employ force in their own defence, they chose for their leader John Zisca, a nobleman who had lost his sight, and who possessed more undaunted courage than religious moderation. In 1421 the Emperor Sigismund led an army of 150,000 men against him, but was repulsed from time to time in very unequal contests, both parties suffering severely. At length, in 1453, these people were granted the free exercise of their religion, under the name of the Bohemian or Moravian Brethren. They were afterwards assailed with many storms of persecution, and have repeatedly suffered dreadful cruelties; but through all they have continued to subsist down to the present day.

Lithuania and Hungary were also deluged with protestant blood, spilt in terrible persecutions at different periods. The

first reformer that suffered death in Switzerland was Claude Hottinger, who was executed in 1523. In that country and in Germany, the suffering party took up arms, and thus to the injury of their cause, departed from the spirit and example of Christ, imitating one of the worst practices of those from whom they conscientiously dissented. Zwingle died in battle in the year 1531.

5.—HOLLAND.

Amazing cruelties were exercised on the Belgic protestants by the Spaniards when they possessed that country. Grotius and others state that 100,000 persons, chiefly through the agency of the Inquisition, suffered by the hand of the executioner on account of their religious principles. In 1523–4 the persecutions of the protestants were extreme. They did not however produce the effect designed; the principles of the Reformation spread rapidly, and the struggle between ecclesiastical oppression and its victims under Charles V. and Philip II. was long and bloody. By an edict published in 1529, all persons convicted of protestantism were condemned to die—the men to be beheaded, the women to be buried alive; and apostates after having recanted to be burned. William Tyndal, of illustrious memory, was strangled and burnt at Antwerp in 1536. The notorious Duke of Alva, within five years from 1567, caused 18,000 persons to be executed, and 100,000 more are said to have taken refuge in Germany. A general revolt followed, and the plains of Holland and Zealand were drenched with human blood. Satan and his agents however failed of their purpose; for in the year 1579 great part of the Netherlands shook off the Spanish yoke and became an independent state, which has long been considered one of the chief countries of the reformed religion. The last execution was that of a female servant named Anne, who was buried alive in 1595. The protestants very soon afterwards obtained full liberty of conscience.

6.—ITALY.

Of this country, which was the birthplace and centre of Papal usurpation, it may be sufficient to say that for a very long period, and especially during the sixteenth century, the dungeons of the Inquisition were filled with victims of religious

intolerance from other parts beside the valleys of Piedmont, and capital punishments awaited those adjudged to be obstinate heretics. Religious light and truth could not however be suppressed, and many noble spirits suffered without mercy.

The Greek church, under the Emperor of Russia, has been in general far more tolerant than the Roman, under an ecclesiastic; each appears to regard the other as a great rival establishment, instead of another fold under the one great Shepherd, the true characters of which, there is reason to fear, have been in a great degree lost by both.

7.—SPAIN.

The secret Inquisition, which was established here in 1480, was the chief instrument employed in detecting and punishing those Spaniards who were suspected of heresy, and also the conquered Moors. The first public burning of protestant heretics, called an *auto da fe*, took place at Valladolid in 1559. The king and his court made it their practice to attend on such occasions, and witness the executions as public shows. At one time protestanism made considerable progress in Spain, but it appears to have been at length nearly rooted out by the extermination of its supporters, to the lasting disgrace of their persecutors and to the equal injury of the nation.

8.—ENGLAND.

This country is also well known to have been the seat of much persecution. Though the illustrious Wicliffe, the first eminent English Reformer, shielded by the favour of powerful supporters, was permitted to die in peace, yet such was the malice of persecution excited against his memory, that his remains were dug out of the grave forty-four years after their interment, his bones were burnt, and the ashes cast into an adjoining brook. This, says one, conveyed them to a river, thence they were transported to the sea, and finally to the wide ocean, thus becoming diffused, like his writings and principles, over the whole world.

King Henry IV., in the year 1400, out of gratitude to the ecclesiastics who had assisted him to usurp the throne, granted them a law, termed *ex officio*, for the fining and burning of heretics. William Santrée, in the same year, was the first who suffered, and he was followed by many more. In the reign of Henry V.

Lord Cobham and others were imprisoned, and soon after, twenty-nine persons, condemned for treason and heresy, were hanged or burnt. The charge of treason appears to have been fabricated by the ecclesiastics, who became more cruel than before, so that their efforts were often overruled by the judges of the law. Another severe act followed against the heretics, who became known as Lollards, and who were generally charged with capital errors, in addition to their particular opinions, that under pretence of being guilty of the whole, they might be represented to the people in more odious colours. Thus England lost many of the best men of the age. The first English female who suffered death for religion, was Joan Boughton, who was publicly burnt in Smithfield in 1494, at the advanced age of 80 years, for her firm conscientious adherence to the doctrines of Wicliffe.

Henry VIII. came to the crown in 1509, and soon showed a furious zeal in religious matters. As a bigoted papist, he first exercised his cruelty on the protestants, to force them to conform; and about the year 1511, eight or ten persons were burnt for their religious opinions. In 1519, seven others were brought to the stake at Coventry, for teaching their children the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, &c. in English. About 1530, being incited by various causes, the king began to change his religious views, and casting off the pope's authority, assumed to himself the title of supreme head of the church. The very same opinions, for which he had brought many to the stake a few years before, were now enjoined by himself; and many of the catholics, who denied his authority, were punished as heretics. In 1533 seven persons were executed, chiefly, as it would appear, on account of their religion, but also charged with treason against the king. Many other executions of catholics and reputed traitors followed, and he became so furious and fickle, that victims appear to have been sacrificed in different places, at the same time, for opposite sentiments. Thus dreadful were the effects of a union of temporal and spiritual authority in the same hands. Not less than a hundred individuals, and probably a far larger number, were brought to the stake during this reign on account of religion; while for other causes the numerous executions were unprecedented in English history! The capricious and vindictive proceedings of

this arbitrary prince furnish a clear illustration of the results of church and state alliance, especially at transition periods !

The short reign of Edward VI. was, for the most part, one of peace and progressive reformation, yet several severe measures were adopted, and two persons were burnt for heresy.

Soon after the accession of Queen Mary, and the restoration of the Roman catholic as the state religion, the most severe persecutions took place; and many illustrious men perished under extreme tortures. In the year 1555, sixty-seven persons were burnt, and eighty-five in the following year. The dreadful scenes are enough to harrow the feelings of humanity ! Beside very many who perished under tortures or by slower means in prison, the whole number brought to the stake for maintaining the principles of the Reformation, in this short reign of five years, was not less than 277 of all classes. Five were bishops, twenty-one ministers, eight gentlemen, eighty-four tradesmen, one hundred husbandmen and servants, fifty-five women, and four children !

Nor was the glory of Queen Elizabeth's prosperous reign untarnished by persecution. Conscientious objections to minor religious and ceremonial matters were reputed to be crimes, and many excellent men, under the name of puritans, died in prison. About 200 papists being either real or reputed traitors, were executed. Two anabaptists were burnt, and others banished. Two Brownists, or puritans, were also put to death ; and against them and the Roman catholics sanguinary laws and cruel measures were enforced, which, though then adopted and advocated by all parties when in power, were utterly inconsistent with the genius of true protestantism.¹

In the reign of James I. two Arians were burnt for heresy, and other offenders were fined, or banished the country. About five hundred of the parochial ministers were silenced or degraded, for not conforming strictly to the rites of the Church of England. In this and some succeeding reigns, upwards of 20,000 persons were driven from England, chiefly to America, by religious persecutions.

Under Charles I. the intolerant Laud was the occasion of great suffering to many conscientious puritans. Fines and imprisonments, whipping and the pillory, were administered

¹ Keightley's History of England.

without mercy. Nor were the presbyterians and independents free from the odium of persecuting under the Commonwealth, many severe measures being adopted to extirpate popery, prelacy, heresy and schism. The execution of the king, arbitrary and faithless as he had proved himself, was the distinguishing opprobrium of this troubled period. After the restoration of monarchy under Charles II., the act for enforcing uniformity was renewed, and by it 2000 ministers were thrust out of office. Then followed the Conventicle and the Oxford Acts, causing some thousands to be imprisoned, of whom 5000 are represented to have perished¹—doubtless a larger number than during the rule of any other English sovereign, on account of religion.

In this reign, as under the Protectorate, the members of the society of friends or quakers, like other dissenters, and even much beyond them, suffered deeply for their religious principles; 3173 had been imprisoned before the restoration of the monarchy, of whom thirty-two died; and 3068 more were incarcerated within two years after that event.² In or about 1666, fifty-five men and eight women were banished or transported as convicts; upwards of a thousand being frequently under imprisonment at the same time. 1460 friends of both sexes were returned, at the accession of James II., as prisoners for conscience sake, and were released by his proclamation in 1685; some hundreds having already died in prison, and the estates of many being greatly wasted by severe distrainments.³ Four members of the society were publicly executed in New England, in 1659 and 1660, by those who had gone thither but a few years before, in order to enjoy and establish religious liberty. To the unflinching firmness of the puritans, and to the equal firmness and greater patience of the friends, in support of their conscientious principles, the British nation is deeply indebted, under the Divine blessing, for the large degree of religious freedom secured under William and Mary, and ever since happily enjoyed.

9.—SCOTLAND.

This land, though for a long time the scene of cruelty and bloodshed on account of religion, has been generally more free from persecution than most others. From 1528 to 1540, many

¹ Neal's Puritans. ² G. Fox and R. Hubberthorn's Letter to Charles II.

³ Sewel's History, vol. ii.

protestants suffered death. Patrick Hamilton, a learned and conscientious young man of illustrious parentage, was the first who was burnt for heresy. The last was Walter Mill, a decrepit minister, at the advanced age of eighty, whose barbarous execution struck the nation with horror, and tended to hasten the downfall of popish power. Persecution however, in a less bloody form, was not unknown in succeeding periods, through a long and severe, but unsuccessful struggle, to compel the acceptance of prelacy by the Scotch.

10.—IRELAND.

In this island likewise, the blood of Christians has been largely shed by their fellow-professors; not so much as in many other nations, under the authority of the government; but in defiance of law, through a general massacre of protestants by private individuals in 1641; when 40,000 or 50,000 are said to have been basely murdered within a few days, in different parts of the kingdom. Some estimate the whole numbers massacred to have been 150,000,¹ and assert that Charles I. was privy to the bloody affair. Many thousands were forced to fly from their homes, and perished with cold, hunger, and a variety of hardships. All these outrages were perpetrated on account of mere differences in religious faith and practice. Pope Urban VIII. is stated to have received the intelligence of the massacre with undisguised joy, absolving all the murderers!

11.—GENERAL REMARKS ON PERSECUTIONS.

The tale of horror, related of each of the countries here briefly noticed, would afford sufficient matter for volumes of mournful and thrilling interest. Millions of Christians, and with very few exceptions, of protestants, have yielded up their lives rather than their principles, and have suffered ignominy and death from other professcd Christians, under the combination of religious and secular authority, for conscientious adherence to their religious tenets. The whole number of these faithful, devoted martyrs is computed by some to amount to fifty millions! In addition to all this loss of life by violent means, who may describe the incarcerations, the tortures, the exiles, the oppres-

¹ Rutty's Historical Introduction.

sions, and the many other personal and pecuniary sufferings, which brought untimely death by slow processes on parents and children; or, in their less vivid forms, wounded the natural and legitimate sensibilities of humanity? Well might the inspired penman predict, that at the fall of mystical Babylon, will be "found in her the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth!"¹

Although the bloody deeds which have been briefly referred to were perpetrated chiefly by papists; yet many of them and of others, less outrageous to the senses and feelings of humanity, have been carried on by protestants also, when they had possession of secular power; and therefore they call, in the same or even in a greater measure, for mourning and reprobation. To trust the officers of any church with the power of the state, or to give the rulers of the state authority in religious matters by any union, has invariably been found a dangerous experiment. These results were foretold by our Lord himself when he said, "yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service."²

The question may well be asked, what was the object aimed at in these various persecutions? One general answer applies to them all, that the main purpose was to bring about uniformity in religious faith and observances. But the result in almost every instance clearly shows, that this object is not to be obtained, and especially by such violent means, but that these tend, on the contrary, greatly to strengthen the dreaded diversities. The fruitless attempt in different ages and countries to establish uniformity in religion, has been the inhuman Moloch, to which the purest blood and the best interests of Christendom have been sacrificed with savage barbarity and profusion!

12.—THE CRUSADES.

Different in character from the persecutions which have been described, but not very different in spirit, were the crusades of the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The persecutions were inflicted by professed Christians on one another: the crusades were carried on by those assuming to be Christians, against avowed Mahomedans. Many of these however, evinced

¹ Rev. xviii. 24.

² John xvi. 2.

dispositions more accordant with the Christian pattern, than those of the pretended followers of Christ, who indeed were the furious assailants, the perpetrators of the wrong; while those whom they attacked were defensive agents, endeavouring to protect themselves, their families and their property. An impartial judge cannot long hesitate in deciding which party was the more guilty of the two, and therefore the more devoid of the distinguishing characteristics of christianity.¹

Between the years 1096 and 1291, two millions of persons are said to have perished on both sides, in the various expeditions, encounters and massacres attending the crusades. At the capture of Jerusalem in 1099, the inhabitants were mercilessly slaughtered without regard to age or sex.

The avowed object of these religious wars, which the highest authorities of the Church promoted, and in which the basest characters took a prominent part, was the recovery of Palestine from the possession of the Mahometans. They ended however in total failure; and a deep enmity towards Christians was excited in these people, which left no hope of their conversion; seeing, as they did, the extreme superstition and wickedness of those professors of christianity, who invaded their country, under a pretence of religious zeal!

Very similar to these unchristian proceedings, was the conduct of the Spaniards towards the Moors in the fifteenth century, and toward the Mexicans soon afterwards. When the Moors conquered Spain in the eighth century, they allowed the Christians the free exercise of their religion: but when the Moors were overcome centuries afterward, the so-called Christian government, worse in reality than heathens, forced many thousands of them, and of the Jews also, either to be baptized, or to be burnt, massacred or banished, while their children were sold for slaves. With shame it must be confessed, that many a Christian nation has a heavy load of sin lying at its door, for cowardly and wicked oppression of the unoffending heathen of

¹ A firman of the Sultan issued in 1850, and quoted in the report of the British and Foreign Bible Society for 1851, secures to his protestant subjects the full and free exercise of their religion throughout the empire, and will bear comparison with the decrees of papal and even protestant rulers, for tolerant and liberal sentiments. An address from the popish bishops of Milan, issued in the same year, and quoted in the same report, breathes a far less Christian spirit.

various countries, in modern as well as in ancient times. How different would be the result, if powerful Christian governments rightly considered the high responsibility laid upon them, for the instruction and improvement of the less favoured races of mankind !

Yet let it not be inferred that christianity itself is responsible for these horrible deeds. It is the departure from its genuine spirit of humility, charity and forbearance, displayed in the example and precepts of its Divine Founder, and the adoption of heathen and Mahomedan principles, that have produced these awful consequences,—consequences which can never be justly charged upon christianity, and which cannot be excused or palliated by pretences of zeal for diffusing the benign gospel of Christ. This will ever proclaim, by conduct as well as in words, “Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men.”

If, as some hopefully believe, the law of kindness and Christian love is beginning to be better understood, and to obtain a more powerful influence in the world ; if the degradation and the sufferings of humanity in its lowest types, and the interests of the people generally, in preference to the arrogant claims of the few, are acquiring greater consideration and more substantial relief ; we may then rejoice with thankful hope in the growth of moral and religious liberty, in the more full appreciation of the character and blessings of the Christian religion, and in the extension of the reign of our beneficent Redeemer. But until mankind are more willing than at present to submit to the teachings and government of the Holy Spirit, to take a just view of the spiritual nature of the gospel dispensation, and to follow the example of the Saviour in lowliness, self-denial and faithfulness, these great and glorious purposes will not be attained. Very principal means to effect them will be, the purification and re-edification of the Christian churches, the disjunction of their alliance with state authority, the spiritual enlargement of the ministry, its independence of worldly policy, possessions and learning, and the encouragement of a free, pure and diffusive development of evangelical truth through all ranks and classes of the community.

SUPPLEMENTARY CHAPTER I.

A WORLDLY SPIRIT IN MANY CHRISTIAN CHURCHES ATTACHES UNDUE IMPORTANCE TO TALENT AND LEARNING IN MINISTERS, AND INTRODUCES EXTRANEous ACCOMPANIMENTS INTO DEVOTIONAL EXERCISES.

THE influence of the state, and of an establishment upheld by law, must not be regarded as the only influence inimical to religion which intrudes itself into the church, under the specious guise of friendship. If any other power than that of Christ, of what nature soever, and with whatever avowed objects, be exalted in holy things, it must, as it tends to usurp the honour and allegiance which are due to him alone, prove an obstacle to the spread of his heavenly kingdom in the minds of men, and therefore is essentially *Antichristian*.

In the present zeal for education, and in the high cultivation of reason, taste and imagination, so commendable and right in their places and within proper bounds, there is great danger lest a superior rank in these attainments procure for ministers of religion more consideration from the professing churches, than is paid to a simple and diligent conformity to the Divine will. lest talent, and learning, and oratory should usurp the place, and command the respect, due to gifts and attainments of a widely different order, and never to be properly estimated by the mere man of the world.

Not possessing the powerful outward influence derived from state endowments, valueless as it is in promoting vital godliness, dissenting churches may be open to peculiar temptation, to adopt such means of attraction or support as may be supposed to make amends for the deficiency. Overflowing houses and respectable congregations are often desired, and the danger is great, that with a view to popular acceptance, and to these secondary objects, worldly policy and the contrivances of man

may be set at work, and measures of an attractive and exciting tendency, far removed from the simplicity, the lowness, and the spirituality of the religion of Jesus, may be studiously employed.

In churches which are endowed, the same desire, on somewhat different grounds, may also exist, to give an undue stimulus to high intellectual acquirements, and to profound theological studies, as necessary and chief qualifications for the ministry of the gospel, when in reality they may be spiritually injurious, when the evidences of conversion of heart may not be strong, or when its existence at all may be very doubtful. Talent, and honour, and worldly influence may be cultivated more assiduously than the gifts of the Holy Spirit, humility and the other retiring Christian graces; because, in fact, they are found to receive from the world more deference and homage than the truly substantial and spiritual, but less showy qualities.

Universities, colleges and schools of learning can never rightly qualify for the ministry of the gospel, and are in no small degree likely, through the false views derived, to infuse false notions on this subject, so momentous to the spiritual interests of the whole community. And hence they have been viewed with fear and jealousy by many devout and eminent Christians, while others of warmer temperament have not hesitated to denounce them generally in strong language of reprobation. Wicliffe termed the universities "Cain's castles," "synagogues of Satan," and affirmed that they were never instituted by Christ. John Huss called them "lieutenants of Antichrist." Luther declared them to be "one of the phases of Antichrist, comely to look upon, but a very chaos within, and the woe that the fifth angel brought upon the earth." Though their discipline and tendency then were probably much more evil than at present, yet strong objections to many of them still exist, in respect to heathen philosophy, and the general impression which they produce as to the comparative value of human and divine teaching. Such seminaries in various religious communities have disappointed the hopes of the church, and clearly proved that the true ministers of Christ are to be called and qualified by him and not by man.

Milton forcibly remarks, "Doubtless, if God only be He who ever gives ministers to his church, and through the whole gospel

never sent us for ministers to the schools of philosophy, but rather bids us beware of such vain deceit—which the primitive church, after two or three ages not remembering, brought herself quickly to confusion,—if all the faithful be now a holy and a royal priesthood, not excluded from the dispensation of things holiest, there will not want ministers elected out of all sorts and orders of men. For the gospel makes no difference from the magistrate to the meanest artificer, if God evidently favour him with spiritual gifts; as He can easily do and oft hath done, while divines and doctors have been passed by.”¹

Is it not still true, as when the words were originally addressed to the Corinthians of old, that “God hath chosen”² the foolish, and weak and despised things of the world, to confound the wise, the mighty and the honourable? and that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”?³ Is there not too general a disposition to rely on the armour of Saul, in preference to the more simple but often efficacious weapons, the sling and the stone of the shepherd? But surely every reliance on human wisdom and worldly power, to the neglect of those qualifications which are from above; and which are only acquired through living faith in the Saviour, and a hearty acceptance of the teachings of the Holy Spirit, and every substitution of the one for the other, whether in connection with state endowments or not, are so many cases of rebellion against the sovereignty of Christ, and desertion to his deadly enemy!

Yet, notwithstanding these observations and complaints, it must by no means be supposed that the writer objects to the cultivation of the intellect, to the attainment of learning, or competence, and to the proper use of them in their right places. Ignorance is the parent of superstition, and not of true religion; but in the pursuit of knowledge as well as of other human objects, the command is still binding, “Let your moderation be known unto all men.” While kept in subjection to the Spirit of Truth, and employed in the fear of the Lord, all these attainments are doubtless to be regarded among the excellent gifts of Divine Providence, to be accepted and cultivated with gratitude, and faithfully employed in the promotion of the great

¹ Milton’s Observations on Hirelings ² 1 Cor. i. 27. ³ 1 Cor xi. 14.

cause of truth and righteousness. But if, unhappily, they are idolized, if they engross our affections, and steal away our hearts from God; if they become principal objects of our desires, receive an undue share of our attention and respect, and are pursued as the chief means of recommendation; in the same degree we inflict a most serious injury on the cause of vital religion, by introducing into the Christian church a base substitute, instead of the sterling reality; we renounce our allegiance to the Lord Jesus, and subject ourselves to imminent danger of the withdrawal of his holy spiritual influences and government. This result may be almost imperceptible to us at first, for the gradations from truth to error are generally slow and hidden; yet it will not less surely follow; till at length, if persisted in, we shall have cause bitterly to lament that, for want of simple dependence on the Spirit of truth, and through our own neglect and disobedience, we did not know the things belonging to our peace, and that they are become hidden from our eyes.

Lastly may be considered the usual attractive accompaniments of public devotion,—the skilful singing, the instrumental music, the pomp of ornament, the parade of authority, the eloquence of oratory. Do they originate in the lowly, simple, self-denying spirit of Jesus? Do they conduce to a truly devotional frame of mind? Are the general effects on the worshippers consistent with a heartfelt renunciation of the world? Are they the fruits of the Spirit of Christ? Or, on the contrary, do they not proceed in degree from a desire to gratify the vain and corrupt dispositions, rather than to edify the awakened and anxiously inquiring soul, to unite opposite interests and tempers which are utterly incompatible? Are not some of them often performed by persons ignorant of the reverence due to sacred things, unhallowed in their lives, and mercenary in their motives? And must it not be confessed, with lamentation, that the most sacred truths become, in the mouths of such persons, a lie on the tongue, a profanation of holy things, and a mockery of the Divine Omniscience? Do they not tend to promote a delusive idea of being engaged in the service of God, when another lord and master is really served? Do they not at times contribute to excite in the hearers the animal impulses, to delight the senses, to feast the natural understanding, taste and imagination? Could they be submitted to a spiritual

crucible, how small, if any, would be the true value of the result? Is it too severe a censure to pronounce them, in a great degree, intellectual and imaginative enjoyments and services; in which the manner is liable to be regarded more than the matter, the style and sound than the substance, the delight than the edification, the natural talent and high learning than the gifts, and graces and influences of the Holy Spirit? But "my people love to have it so;" and to the Christian churches it may be mournfully said "What will ye do in the end thereof?"¹

Henry Martyn, the devoted oriental missionary, who may be noticed as one among many witnesses in confirmation of these views, declared his conviction, when near the close of life, that the ritual of the churches, their good forms, and every thing they have, are a mere shadow without the power of truth; but he said he felt that it was impossible to convince the people of the world, whether Christians or Mahometans, that what they call religion is merely a thing of their own, having no connexion with God and his kingdom. This, he remarked, was a subject that had lately pressed much on his mind. "How senseless," he adds, "is the zeal of churchmen against dissenters, and of dissenters against the church! The kingdom of God is neither meat nor drink, nor anything perishable, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."² How many, at such an awful period, have had similar convictions of the insignificance of human systems, and of the infinite importance of the substance and life of religion!

¹ Jer. v. 31.

² See his Life.

SUPPLEMENTARY CHAPTER II.

THE ARDENT PURSUIT OR LARGE POSSESSION OF WEALTH, LUXURY,
AND OTHER WORLDLY ATTAINMENTS AND ENJOYMENTS, INJU-
RIOUS TO THE SPIRITUAL INTERESTS OF INDIVIDUALS AND OF
THE CHURCH.

But little regard is paid by Christians generally to the express command of Christ, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth,—but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,—for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."¹ Many are the exhortations and warnings of a similar nature recorded in the New Testament; teaching us that the eager pursuit and large accumulation even of the lawful things of this world, as wealth, honour, learning, friendship, business or pleasure, have a powerful tendency to absorb the mind and affections, to alienate them from God, to fix them on the world and its transitory objects. Thus all these become rivals to Christ in the soul, and the earnest desire of them, or, to use one word of comprehensive import, "*covetousness*, is (in fact,) idolatry,"²—the setting up and worship of the creature instead of the Creator.

The danger of this idolatry is not however confined to the most affluent or most learned; though with them it is often imminent. It extends to all who pursue with intensity any of those objects, however limited may be the amount already attained. He who deals in a small way, and counts by dozens or scores, may be as devoted to his purpose, as full of penuriousness, and as proud of success, as the extensive merchant or banker, who reckons by thousands or tens of thousands. He may be even a greater slave to mammon, and more inflated with conceit. The same remark may apply to the yeoman of moderate means and the affluent distinguished

¹ Matt. vi. 19—21.

² Col. iii. 5.

nobleman; to the man of slender literary attainments and the scholar of profound erudition. It is not only, perhaps not so much, the amount attained, but the eagerness of aspiration and the pride of self-gratulation that are injurious, be the possession large or small. Where one soul is ruined by great wealth or learning, is there not much reason to fear that a hundred, who never acquire either of these, do yet become victims to the world, through their keen devotedness to the pursuit, making to themselves false gods, other objects of love and veneration, and bowing down and serving them? Yet how many excuses does each make, and how often do we see the mote in our brother's eye, without being sensible of the beam that is in our own! "*Auri sacra fames,*" has long been a poetical theme of satirical reprobation, but the subject requires to be viewed more seriously by the Christian, and to be brought home closely to the conscience of each, with the secret but deep inquiry, "Lord, is it I?"

Were we but sufficiently alive to the great truth, that we are but "stewards of the manifold grace of God," whether spiritual or temporal,—stewards for Him and for the community, every member of which we are commanded to love as ourselves, and that for the right fulfilment of this stewardship each will be called to account, and judged accordingly; then surely the gifts themselves would engage less of our attention than the bountiful Giver, and their faithful occupation; while in this we should derive a refined and a generous satisfaction, attended with an humbling sense of our very imperfect administration, and an increasing desire to fulfil the command, "occupy till I come."

Though this subject is somewhat beside the special object of the present treatise, yet candour and consistency seemed to require, that ambition, wealth and luxury in the church at large should have a passing notice of reprehension, as well as in the ministry. Experience shows that if the people in general are wealthy, they will not long be satisfied with the ministry of the poor and humble of this world; if they are highly educated and polished, they will be much disposed to reject the ministrations of the simple-hearted and the unlearned. What the people are, the ministry will be; and what the ministers are, the people will be, according to the ancient saying, "Like people, like priest."¹ The Christian's path for all classes is how-

¹ Hosea iv. 9.

ever through the strait gate and the narrow way ; it is a path of self-denial and of the cross, and is in direct opposition to self-indulgence and worldly gratification. Where wealth abounds, self-indulgence is, generally speaking, the natural and almost inevitable consequence. Tie it down, and limit its outbreaks as best we may, it will defy our efforts of restraint, either in ourselves or in our families. Where the means of worldly gratification exist in excess, the end to which they naturally lead is seldom very remote, although we may attempt to counteract the influence. Moderation is generally the line of safety, happiness and usefulness. Much are those ministers of all denominations entitled to our sympathy and commendation, who uphold the truth unflinchingly, and without respect of persons ; looking with a single eye to their Divine Master, and remembering the language of one formerly, that if he sought to please men, he should not be the servant of Christ.¹

The Reformation, which released the minds and even the estates of men from oppression, and applied a greater stimulus to human thought and energy, gave also additional security to private property : and from these and other causes the commercial pursuits of the world took a start, producing large accumulations of wealth, and assimilating many Christian professors to the world and its spirit.

Can a single church be found, which, if we would judge candidly and impartially, is faultless in this matter ? Do not the spirit of the world, its blandishments and its influences, too often usurp the place of higher and holier motives, first creeping in almost imperceptibly, now gaining ground on one side, and then intrenching themselves on the other, till even the most holy places are not clear of the pollution, or free from the desolating consequences ? In how many modes, and under how many forms, does Antichrist show himself, like the more palpable objects of the idolatry of the ancient world, still “ opposing and exalting himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God ? ”² Men of business, devoted to the world but possessing good moral reputation, make themselves useful to the churches by their contributions in money, and by personal exertion or countenance. Hence they often obtain a consideration and place in religious

¹ Gal. i. 10.

² 2 Thess. ii. 4.

denominations, which tends to lower these in their spiritual character, and to introduce into them a worldly and an injurious distinction between high and low, rich and poor. The business spirit invades such churches, pecuniary matters occupy their great care, and money asserts a powerful but deteriorating influence.

The brotherhood of believers, and their equality in the sight of God, without distinction of outward circumstances, are sentiments too little cherished by Christians in practice, however they may be coldly acknowledged in words. The spirit of christianity and the example of the apostolic age demand from every church more full consideration of the spiritual rights and equal religious position of its humbler members, as well as a generous provision for their necessities and comforts. What church is wholly unconvicted by the close rebuke of the apostle James? "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment, and ye have respect unto him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him Sit thou here in a good place, and say to the poor Stand thou there, or Sit here under my footstool, are ye not partial in yourselves, and judges of evil thoughts?"¹

If our learning, or possessions, or enjoyments are chiefly of this world; and if these are of more weight in our practical regard than heavenly treasure—than the love of God and his truth,—we are beyond doubt in a state of darkness and great danger. If the attractions of the present scene have a stronger hold upon our minds than those of heaven, and if they continue to do so, whither, alas, will they conduct us in the end? How can we escape certain destruction, unless, through more entire submission to the convictions and workings of Divine love and grace, we prefer and embrace those things which are most excellent? If the love of the world, in whatever guise, usurp the first place in the thoughts and affections, we are equally guilty of idolatry and obnoxious to its punishment with the less enlightened ancient or modern heathen.

Yet we must not run into an opposite extreme, and profess with the ascetics to despise the things of this life,—those tem-

¹ James ii. 1—4.

poral benefits and blessings bestowed by a bountiful Giver,—or even with some religious but inconsiderate persons speak lightly of them, as unworthy of our notice and attention. They are to be thankfully accepted, rightly applied and temperately used in their proper places; not to be abused on the one hand in wastefulness or pride to our own destruction, nor excessively pursued and accumulated on the other, to a destruction less apparent but not less sure. Learning, riches, honour, business and recreation are unquestionably good and eminently useful, when kept in subserviency, and lawfully applied to the honour of their great Giver, and to the benefit of those around us; but if they obtain the first place in our hearts, to the exclusion of the holiest and highest objects, they bring with them carnal security, blindness and death as to the interests of eternity.

Although the eager pursuit of knowledge is here included with that of other worldly gratifications, yet it is by no means designed to put them on a level, or to estimate them as of similar character and equal value, the one being the cultivation and enjoyment of the intellectual, the other more connected with the corporeal and sensual faculties; the one more noble and restricted to reasonable beings, the other more resembling the pursuits of the lower creation; the one a more direct provision for the mind, the other for the body. Inasmuch as the mind exceeds the body, so do the powers, objects and enjoyments of the one rise superior to those of the other, though intimately allied, and in this world mutually dependent. The general diffusion of knowledge is the honourable characteristic of the present age; and learning is truly said to be the handmaid of religion; but if the handmaid usurp the place of the mistress, she is wont to rule with a short-sighted view and a destructive hand. "The Spirit and the understanding" must go together, and the Spirit must ever be the foremost. The highest and noblest exercise of the mental powers is not merely within the range of human literature and science, but, subdued and chastened by the Holy Spirit, in a much more exalted sphere; in the knowledge, fear and love of our Father in heaven, our Redeemer and Sanctifier; in the contemplation of the immortal nature of man, of his fallen condition, and of his unspeakable privileges through redeeming grace in the gospel of life and salvation; in a daily estimate of the blessings

enjoyed, and the duties owed to all around us; and thus, through faith and obedience, in serious preparation for the approaching state of eternal and spiritual existence.

There is the pride of intellect and learning, as well as that of worldly honour and wealth; the scorn of the former toward the unlettered and ignorant, as well as the disdain of the latter toward the poor and humble. The natural repugnance and hostility to simple faith and contrition of heart may exist equally in the learned and in the opulent, in the confident reasoner and in the luxurious millionaire; nay, perhaps even more largely in the former than in the latter. The amassing of both is declared, by our Lord and his apostles, to make it hard for such as trust in them to receive the things of God and to enter His kingdom.

The sacred historians have emphatically remarked that Christ "preached the gospel to the poor," and that "the common people heard him gladly;" while the rich, the full and the learned for the most part rejected and despised him. And is it not too often so in the present day with respect to the teachings of his Holy Spirit and the devout acceptance of religious truth? Has not poverty of spirit more affinity to external poverty than to temporal grandeur? and are not afflictions and humiliations well adapted and even necessary, to convince us that "here we have no continuing city," and to impel us to "seek one that is to come?" To many of us, as well as to the ancient church of Laodicea, may it not be truly said, "Thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked?" We are too liable to forget our fallen and entirely dependent condition. Right reformations generally take the first hold among the humbler classes. The thirsty minds of these are often the most open and candid to receive, inquire and consider; while the full soul loathes even the honeycomb, questions and resists. Yet the remark must be repeated, that it is the eagerness of pursuit, the absorption of the thoughts and affections, the complacency of self, in whatever class they are found, which do the mischief, which harness the mind to this world, and weaken its hold on heavenly and eternal things.

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